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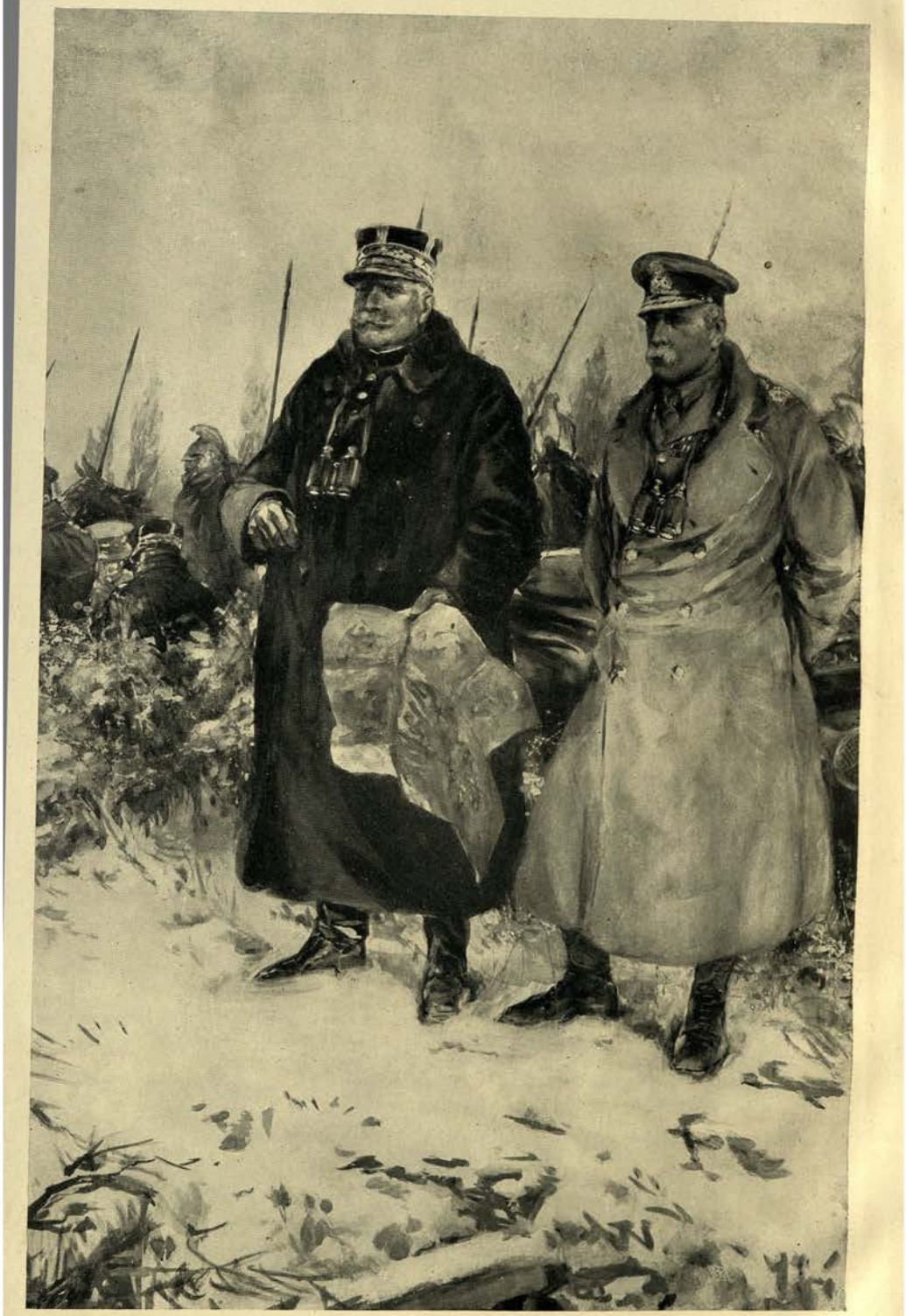
# EUROPEAN HISTORY



MARSHAL JOFFRE AND FIELD-MARSHAL FRENCH

The French Generalissimo and the first Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in France

# EUROPEAN HISTORY:

## Great Leaders & Landmarks from Early to Modern Times

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Volume VI

## THE GREAT WAR

By

Edwin Sharpe Grew

THE GRESHAM PUBLISHING COMPANY LIMITED
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# Publishers' Note

This, the sixth volume of *European History*, completes a task, which, begun some years before the Great War had cast its evil shadow over the world, has of necessity been profoundly affected by that catastrophe. In its original plan the underlying scheme of the work was to present a gallery of biographical sketches in four volumes, illustrating the main currents of European history "by the lives of men whose names are generally recognized as its high lights"; but even at that stage it was intended, as stated in the Publishers' Note to the first volume, that in some momentous events the strictly biographical form would not always be adhered to.

With the outbreak of the war it was deemed advisable to add two further volumes, abandoning the biographical form altogether. One volume was devoted to an account of the political developments of European history during the nineteenth century—without an adequate knowledge of which it was impossible to understand all the conflicting interests involved in Germany's challenge for world power—and the other devoted to an illustrated record of the war itself. Leaders and Landmarks stand out clearly in each of these concluding volumes, though the stage becomes more and more crowded as the closing acts of the drama are reached.

The first two volumes in the series, it will be remembered, were written by A. R. Hope Moncrieff, author among other works of *The World of To-day*, which did for mankind in space what this work does for mankind in time. The Rev. H. J. Chaytor, who translated Ferrero's *Greatness and Decline of Rome*, followed with two volumes bringing the narrative down to the foundations of the German Empire.

To each of these volumes was added an Appendix consisting of a "Chronological Conspectus" and a "Summary of the Great Movements of European History", the Conspectus prepared by Walter Murray, the Summary by F. Harrison, M.A. Then came the fifth

volume by William Collinge, M.A., covering European Political History from the Congress of Vienna to the earliest phases of the Great War; and finally the present volume by Edwin Sharpe Grew, M.A., author of *War with the Boers* and *The Struggle in the Far East*, who has endeavoured to present the various phases of that unparalleled struggle in something approaching true perspective.

His record has not suffered by delay. It takes into account the leading documents published since the signing of Peace, not only in the Allied and Associated countries, but also in Germany itself, and bears throughout the impress of a mind singularly well informed regarding the inner meaning of most of the complicated moves in the widely scattered theatres of war.

Every effort has been made to provide that the illustrations may be worthy of the text, and the maps throughout have been prepared with scrupulous regard for accuracy. In the earlier volumes the great art collections at home and abroad were drawn upon for the portraits and paintings of historical and archæological interest, re produced in colour and black-and-white. For the present volume a wide choice has been made from the official photographs from various battle fronts, and pictures, by well-known artists, of many of the outstanding incidents in the war on land and sea. The publishers may be permitted a final word of satisfaction that the work, carried on through years of unexampled stress and difficulty, has thus been brought to a fitting end.

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# THE GREAT WAR

## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE MARNE

The First Battle of the Marne, to which the closing chapter in the last volume of *European History* had brought us, is sometimes called the "miracle of the Marne", because here the march of the Germans, which had every appearance of irresistibility, was arrested, and the footsteps of their armies turned back; their victory, which had seemed so assured, was wrested from them; the blow which they had struck for the leadership of Europe recoiled on themselves, and thenceforward, for four years, until another battle on the same river, they were struggling to escape the consequences of their first failure. Before examining more closely the causes which led to this reverse of fortune, the events both strategic and tactical which led to the positions on the Marne must be recapitulated. Lord Haldane revealed in 1919, when his disclosures could have no effect on either the conduct or the policy of the war, what had been the military arrangement between Great Britain and France in the event of a German attack on France through Belgium. It was that a British Expeditionary Force should land in France and be mobilized in the neighbourhood of Maubeuge. The mobilization, as already has been narrated, took place, and the force was in position before it was expected, and in numbers greater than had been stipulated.

One condition, however, does not appear to have been made clear between the Allies. When, of two allies, one contributes a much smaller military force than the other, it is assumed that the smaller military force is placed under the command of the Generalissimo of the larger. That condition was never fulfilled in its completeness between Great Britain and France till 26th April, 1918, when circumstances enforced it; and, though there were many admirable substitutes for this unity of command during the four and a half years of war, its absence affected both strategy and tactics. General French went to France in command of the British army in a sense in which no French single Army Commander could claim independent leadership. General Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief, was in command of six armies, each of which was absolutely at his disposal, and could be moved in obedience to his orders. But the British army could only be moved after negotiation with its individual commander; though no implication is made by this reservation that General French at any time failed to give to General Joffre the fullest support, cooperation, or obedience. It is to be noted, nevertheless, that, just as the French plan of campaign, designed before the German invasion of France began, had to be radically altered because of the German successes, so the part which, in General French's opinion, ought to be played by the British army had to be altered too.

The dominant idea in British pre-

campaign strategy of the function which the British army should assume, was that of a force threatening the German communications on the western flank, while at the same time acting as a screen for the protection of the Channel ports. The French believed that, with the resistance offered by the Belgian army and the British army, time and opportunity would be afforded to strike a successful counter-blow at the weak German left flank in the south, and either overwhelm it or snap the link between the two main groups of the German armies. Neither of these expectations was realized. Both were upset by the action of the Germans, who began by a success beyond the expectations of their adversaries, and perhaps beyond their own, but who, in the effort to attain a success still greater, asked of their plan more than it could yield, and paid the penalty of failure by having to abandon the advantage they had won, without the possibility of salving from it any smaller advantage which would contain the seeds of future victory.

This review of strategic intentions must be completed by a recapitulation of the disposition of the forces. The German armies had been divided into two groups: the first, which was to secure the quick decision, operated through Belgium; the second was to meet and counter the French forces invading Lorraine. The two were connected by a weak link, and another weak group watched Alsace and the Vosges. The first group of 16 corps was composed of the First (von Kluck), Second (von Bülow), and Third (von Hausen) Armies with strong cavalry. The second group (12 corps) consisted of the Fifth (German Crown Prince), and Sixth (Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht) Armies. The link between the two was the Fourth (Duke Albrecht of Württemberg) Army of 4 corps; and in the extreme south was the Seventh (Von Heeringen) Army with 2 corps and reserves.

Against this, reckoning in reverse order, the French armies in their first grouping were set out as follows: An Alsace group, opposite von Heeringen, of 5 divisions with 4 in reserve; along the Lorraine frontier the main offensive group, consisting of the First (Dubail) Army, and the Second (Castelnau) Army, consisting of 9 corps with 3 reserve divisions; then, about Verdun, the Third (Ruffey) Army. The Fifth (de Lanrezac) Army, with 3 corps and 3 reserve divisions, watched the Ardennes as far as the Belgian frontier near Rocroi. A Fourth (Langle de Cary) Army, of 4 corps and 2 reserve divisions, was the mass of manœuvre held in reserve behind the centre. This was the first grouping, and shows that, while the French were not wholly unprepared for the violation of neutrality, they had not believed that the Germans could force the Meuse and take the wide and rapid sweep through the plains of Belgium which, in fact, they accomplished.

The French put their plan in operation, and in Lorraine the First and Second Armies, under Dubail and Castelnau, fought their way forward as far as Saarburg by the 19th of August. But they had encountered steadily stiffening opposition from the German forces; and Joffre, so far from being able to send in fresh forces to aid them, had been compelled to turn his attention to the invaded north, and divert troops to meet the Germans there. Consequently, when Prince Rupprecht and von Heeringen advanced to counter-attack Castelnau and Dubail, the armies under these two French generals were weakened, and had to fall back to positions covering Nancy and Luneville. The French cavalry had sounded the territory of eastern Belgium almost as far as Liége in the first fortnight of August, without finding confirmation of the great German tide moving westwards. It was not till 15th August that Joffre was completely assured of the character of the German plan, and then he moved de Lanrezac and the Fifth Army into the angle of the Sambre and Meuse between Charleroi, Namur, and Dinant. This army was reinforced by two corps, and in addition another three divisions were taken from the French striking force to reinforce the defences of the north. Langle de Cary's army (Fourth) in reserve was moved up to take the place of the Fifth Army and to connect up with the Third Army in front of Verdun. Lastly, as it was now certain that German cavalry

was heading a German advance through Belgium, General d'Amade was sent with a composite force to Arras.

These movements were not completed till 21st August (the time at which the British Expeditionary Force, having completed its mobilization at Maubeuge, was marching northwards), and at this date the French were far from renouncing their idea of a successful counter-attack. Joffre still thought that the Germans were not strong enough to carry out their plan of striking at the Allied left without leaving their centre in front of de Lanrezac insecure. As late as 22nd August it appears to have been the French belief that it would be possible to envelop the Germans north of the Meuse by an advance of the British army and of de Lanrezac's Fifth French Army pivoting on Namur. By 23rd August the German surprise had been sprung, and this dream had disappeared into thin air. Some 400,000 German troops were advancing on the 270,000 French and British troops in position between Dinant, Namur, and Mons. Thus the French Higher Command had to change their plan at the last moment. The German General Staff, in the first deployment of forces, had outmanœuvred the Allies by a combination of treachery and skill, and on the critical left flank the Franco-British forces could come into action only piecemeal against an enemy in superior force and able to deploy fully and swiftly.

The first blow, delivered by von Bülow's army (Second), fell on de Lanrezac and the French Fifth Army (21st–23rd); and de Lanrezac's task in fighting the Battle of the Sambre was rendered more difficult by the fall of the fortress of Namur (23rd). The result of the collapse of this pivot was that the Germans were given the opportunity to get up and threaten de Lanrezac's right flank and communications. The French general had to send the 1st Army Corps to protect these communications instead of employing it to counter-attack the Germans, and thus a useful striking force was lost to him. The German commander opposed to him, relieved from anxiety of a counter-attack, renewed his own attack, and by nightfall of the 23rd General de Lanrezac was in the position that his front had everywhere been driven in, his flank threatened by the fall of Namur, and by the appearance of a new German army (Third—von Hausen) at Dinant. He had also received information that the British army was being attacked by three German corps, while a fourth was working round its left flank. He was ordered to send General Sordet and the French cavalry corps to prevent this envelopment. He himself ordered a general retirement, taking with him two reserve divisions which were coming up on the British right. This is what General French meant by saying that General de Lanrezac's retirement left the British flank in the air. Before the British had begun to withdraw from Mons the French Fifth Army had been retiring for twelve hours.

The retreat of the British from Mons has been already described. Its last engagement of importance was that which General Smith-Dorrien fought at Le Cateau, and which, in Lord French's opinion, as expressed in his second thoughts of 1919, ought not to have been undertaken.[1] The losses in the retreat of the British force had been heavy, but they might have been heavier had the Germans been competent to organize a cavalry pursuit. Their neglect to do so is in part attributable to their own exhaustion, but still more to von Kluck's belief that the British army was completely beaten. German official reports greatly overestimated the British losses and the exhaustion of the troops which had endured them. From the exhaustion they had recovered: and reinforcements had made up some of the losses. After Le Cateau (26th August) Sir John French's retreat had been directed due south to the Aisne, which was safely crossed between Soissons and Compiègne on 31st August, and thenceforward the length of the marches was reduced. Von Kluck turned his attention to some French forces on the British left on 27th August, but it was left to von Bülow to use such of his Second Army as he could spare from following up de Lanrezac to pursue the British, with whom he had come into contact on the 27th and 28th, when Sir Douglas

[1] "1914", by Lord French (Constable).

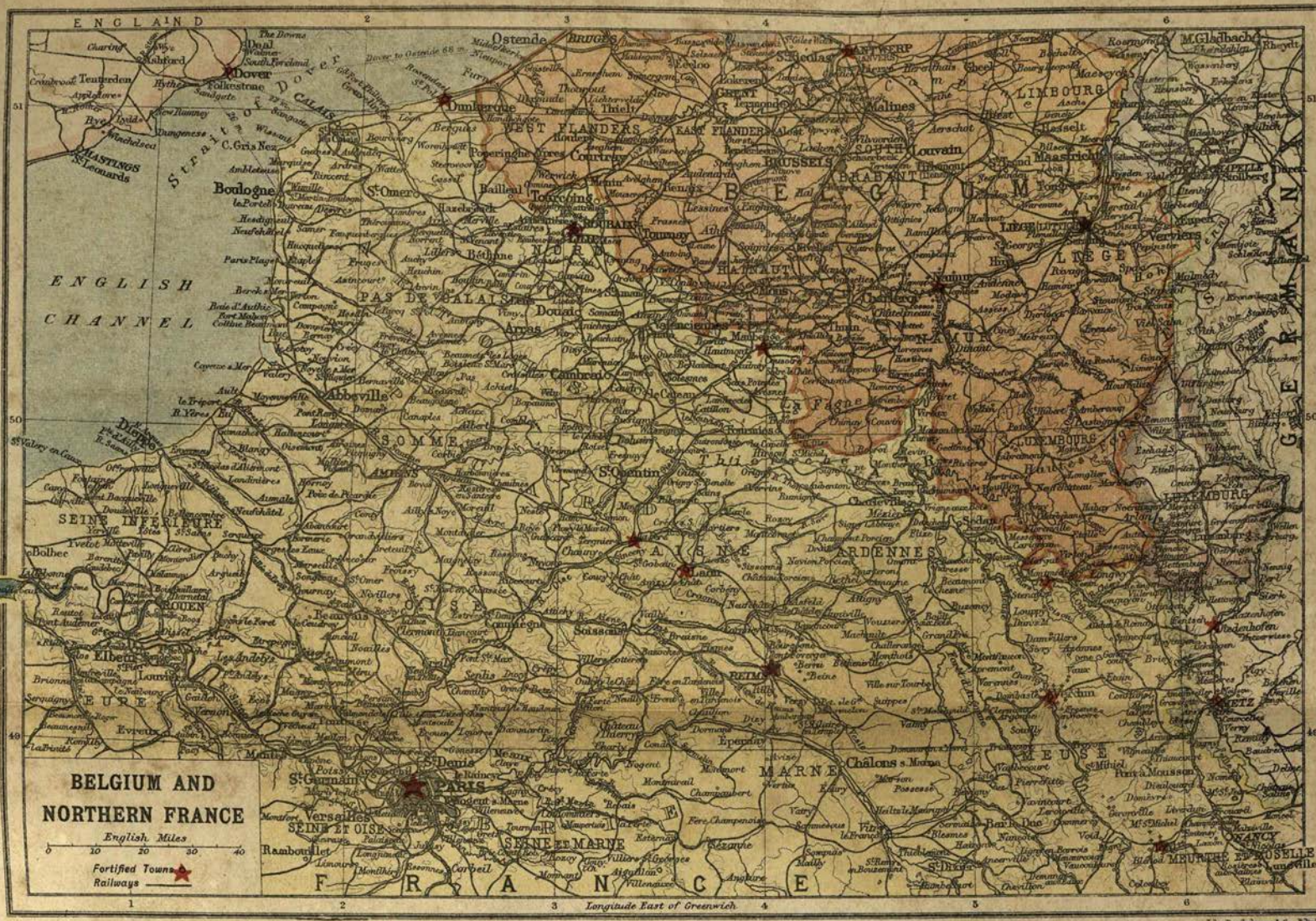
Haig's corps and the British cavalry were engaged. On the 29th von Bülow had other matters to deal with, for on that day de Lanrezac turned on him and inflicted a reverse at Guise which was extremely useful to the Allies at that moment, and long afterwards drew commendation of de Lanrezac from his severe critic (Lord) French.

Meanwhile an important development had taken place just to the south. A new (Sixth) French army was forming under General Maunoury in the neighbourhood of Montdidier, and this force, which included Sordet's cavalry, was designed to meet von Kluck's envelopment, and cover the threatened British left. It was the new "mass of manœuvre" replacing the Fourth Army, then heavily engaged in the Ardennes. Yet another army, the Ninth, under General Foch, was being formed behind the French centre.

In the meantime the dissipation of the French plan of a counter-offensive on their own right against the armies of the Crown Princes had been in progress, though General Joffre never abandoned it, and replaced one plan successively by another. Up to the afternoon of 23rd August, when it became evident to him that the German plan was maturing faster than his own, Joffre had hoped to send the Fourth Army under General Langle de Cary to strike at the flank of the German armies moving through Belgium. On 23rd August the intention went astray, for in the wooded and hilly country, at the foot of the Ardennes plateau, Langle de Cary could not get at the Germans fast enough to interfere with their greater movement. They held him off, and proceeded with their envelopment on the west, so that by 27th August the Franco-British left in retreat was south of St. Quentin, and much nearer to Paris than the Fourth Army of Langle de Cary, which was to have given the Germans pause. Joffre had been obliged to give up the plan and withdraw his whole forces to a line north of Verdun. General Sarrail (successor to Ruffey) who commanded the Third Army, faced the German Crown Prince outside Verdun; and Langle de Cary, by 4th September, had slowly withdrawn his army through Rheims and Chalons to a position astride the Marne. His right was in touch with Sarrail's left in the Argonne. Joffre's Army Order (25th August) had recognized the new situation and indicated a new plan, which was to reconstitute the left flank by strengthening the French Fourth and Fifth Armies and the British army with new forces drawn from the armies of the right, which had been designed in the first instance as striking forces. The new rôle to be played by the right was that of standing on the defensive while the strengthened left prepared to counter-attack. Out of this design was born Maunoury's Sixth Army.

Joffre had destined for Maunoury's army a thrust from the Somme. Again the Germans were too quick. That "colossal" march of von Kluck's army, for which German Head-quarters had prepared so long, was threatening Paris before Maunoury was under way. His forces had perforce to retire towards Paris, falling back on Creil, and parting company with two reserve divisions (under d'Amade) which went westward through Amiens. General Gallieni from this date onward was given the task of remaking, or completing, the Sixth Army, which he did by reassembling d'Amade's two divisions and speeding up the reconstitution and transport of other troops brought from the reservoir of the right wing, or from new troops arriving from Algeria. By 8th September Maunoury had an army covering Paris from the north-east, his right north of the Marne at Lagny, his left at Dammartin. His army at first consisted of the 7th Corps, two reserve divisions (55th and 56th), some Moroccans and marines. It was reinforced (5th September) by one of d'Amade's two divisions, by the 4th Corps (5th September), and by the new 45th Division.

Maunoury's army was thus stronger than those forces of von Kluck with which he was in contact, and was certain of being reinforced faster. Joffre was therefore beginning to see his way to the counter-stroke he had all along meditated on the left. To make it more effective he had begun, as early as 29th August, the formation of a new army, the Ninth, under General Foch, which was constituted of forces drawn from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John Bartholomew & Co. Edinr.

the already depleted right wing, and from the Fourth Army, which had up to that time been less hard hit than any other army. He interposed Foch and the Ninth Army between the Fourth Army and the Fifth Army, which had retreated from Guise, and in the command of which de Lanrezac had been replaced by Franchet d'Esperey. The idea was that Foch's army should hold safe the centre of the French line between Verdun and Paris, while the Fifth Army helped in the counter-attack against von Kluck.

Joffre's Army Order of 4th September indicates his belief that von Kluck and the First German Army had overshot themselves in their effort to outflank the Allied left, and would prove vulnerable to a counter-attack in that region. He assigned tasks (for September 6th) to the different armies as follows: Maunoury was to march eastwards and drive the Germans over the Ourcq, which here flows downwards to the Marne. The British army was to advance north-east and attack the Germans about Coulommiers on the Grand Morin—one of the two rivers, Grand Morin and Petit Morin, which branch off roughly parallel to one another south of the Marne. The French Fifth Army on the British right was to push due north. Farther to the right Foch, with the French Ninth Army, was to hold the centre and cover the offensive of the Fifth Army.

The Battle of the Marne, with its success in stemming the German invasion, and its failure to accomplish the overthrow which was hoped for it, was like the successes and failures before and after, the resultant of the combined interaction of the two strategies, Allied and German. As in a contest between individuals, each side did as well as the other would allow it to do; each made mistakes; and each paid the penalty which the adversary was able to enforce. The Germans made two mistakes. The first, which was so evident that it was immediately perceptible to all the world, was in believing that the Franco-British left, and especially that part of it which consisted of the British army, was worse beaten than was, in fact, the case. The second mistake was the belief that the French right was in great strength, and continued to be so even after its deployment against Lorraine had failed. While Joffre was withdrawing forces from this wing to place them on the left and in the centre, the Germans continued to hammer there in the belief that they were forcing back the bulk of the French armies, and had to make only one more push to convert retreat into disaster, and to reproduce on their right wing a situation comparable to that which von Kluck had brought about on the left. If this result could be attained, then the German armies would be in the position of forcing a *double* envelopment—von Kluck and von Bülow in the west and the Crown Prince Rupprecht and von Heeringen in the east acting as either leg of the pincers.

Colour was lent to this German delusion by the magnificent fight which Castelnau's army made in front of Nancy. Castelnau's forces had been reduced by the withdrawal of corps and divisions, but from 3rd September to 6th September he fought in the Battle of the Grand Couronné with a fury of resistance such as continually persuaded the Germans to believe that but one more thrust was needed to bring about a French collapse in the east, recovery from which would be impossible. The Battle of the Grand Couronné was, in a striking phrase of Major-General Sir F. Maurice, the French Ypres; and Castelnau, after beating off the culminating attack on 6th September, sustained others more spasmodic which the Germans began to make in order to prevent Joffre from moving the large concentrations which they supposed to be there. Long afterwards Lord French remarked that neither side appreciated at this moment the real and apparent strength which the machine-gun had conferred in the defence; and the observation was equally true of the French 75's, when they had a clear field of action. The resistance of Castelnau certainly deceived the Germans as to his army's strength; and by the same token left them blind to the swelling forces of the armies gathering momentum for the counter-attack in the west.

The other mistake of the Germans, which was placed first, was that attributable in equal shares to von Kluck and to German General Head-quarters. Von Kluck had

forced the British army back; and the German General Head-quarters, resting secure in the belief that it could fight no more, had allowed von Kluck to neglect the great opportunity of never giving it time to rally, in order to pursue the favourite German plan of envelopment. The German strategy resembled, in short, that of a chess-player who neglects to take a powerful piece of his opponent because he believes he sees an opportunity of mating him. The policy is sound if the mate is certain; it is unsound if the mate would certainly result, after a decent interval, from the gain and loss of the piece.

Instead of pursuing the British, von Kluck marched south-westwards to envelop the Allied line. Here he came into contact with the two divisions of d'Amade, and with the nucleus of the army which was to be Maunoury's. Von Kluck drove d'Amade's divisions before him through Amiens, and forced Maunoury back over the Avre. Maunoury, too weak yet to fight, fell back steadily through Creil towards the northern defences of Paris. But it is important to observe that all the time *he was falling back on supports coming up*. He was growing stronger as he retreated, while von Kluck was growing weaker, from the lengthening of his communications. But, ignorant of this, and wrongly inferring from Maunoury's retreat that Maunoury's army was ineffectual as a fighting force (and that the British army was done for) von Kluck went on his south-westerly course till 31st August. If all had happened as German General Head-quarters dreamed he should then have been in position to turn in on the French Fifth Army's flank, while at the other end of the line the Crown Prince Rupprecht drove home the hammer blow at Nancy and Verdun. This was the will o' the wisp that led the Germans astray when, if they had been satisfied with more modest gains, they might have taken the important pieces of Amiens and (probably) Paris, besides putting Maunoury and the British army out of action.

It might not have happened thus. There are theorists who have argued that Paris might have been abandoned, and that the lengthening of the German communications would have exposed the German armies to a more lethal counter-attack than they sustained; but we can only consider the campaign on the basis of the recorded facts. What did happen was that on 30th August von Kluck, who had on the 27th marched south-westwards while the British were retiring south, repeated the manœuvre by changing direction to the *south-east*, while Maunoury's troops, like the British, retired south. The German design was to fall on the French Fifth Army's flank and roll up the line. This decision was presumably arrived at by von Moltke at German General Head-quarters. On the evening of 1st September von Kluck's main body—9th, 3rd, 4th, 2nd Corps (left to right in that order)—lay between Vic-sur-Aisne and a point 12 miles north-west of Compiègne.

Von Kluck's men had been hardly tried. They had been marched to the limit of their endurance, and the double change of direction had given them additional mileage to cover. On 4th September the main body of them had for the most part crossed the Marne and was dispersed along the Petit Morin stream between Montmirail and La Ferté-sous-Jouarre. The German cavalry was across the stream, and von Kluck had a reserve corps (4th) at his left rear, 8 miles west of the Ourcq. The British army on 5th September had fallen back to the Forest of Crecy, to bring it in line with the French Fifth Army. On the afternoon of 5th September it received the news that it was to go forward again, an order that sent a burst of cheering through the ranks, especially when it was learnt that the advance was to be made to the north and that we were in fact turning on the Germans. By this time von Kluck was becoming aware that all was not going according to plan. He had made up his mind that he must do something against Maunoury; so he decided to stop his advance and strengthen his 4th Reserve Corps in front of the Ourcq. He therefore marched his 2nd Corps back across the Marne, and a little later withdrew another corps which was somewhere between the British and the French Fifth Army for the like object of fighting, and, by superior numbers, of defeating the French Sixth

Army. He counted on being able to hold back the British easily and the French Fifth Army without much difficulty, with the aid that von Bülow could give him.

Again his plan failed. De Lanrezac had retired from the command of the French Fifth Army, for reasons which he afterwards said had nothing to do with the retirement from the Mons front in conjunction with the British, and had been replaced by General Franchet d'Esperey. D'Esperey signalized his accession to command by gaining ground from the Germans, instead of losing it, throughout the day. The German cavalry similarly failed to hold up the British, and after resisting them for some time in the Forest of Crecy fell back to escape encirclement by our broadly-fronted advancing line. The British centre reached the Grand Morin that evening. This was probably the first intimation that von Kluck received that he had been mistaken in believing that the British army could be neglected as a reacting force. Beyond the British and the French Fifth Army the Germans by heavy attacks pressed back both Foch and Langle de Cary, but did not succeed in pressing them back far.

This was the veritable opening of the Battle of the Marne; the realization of the Germans that the victory which had seemed assured was on the point of slipping from their grasp; the hope and expectation on the part of the French Head-quarters Staff that the German success might be converted into a reverse. The German plan was not inelastic, though, as events showed, it had been pushed too far in one direction for recovery. It had become clear that von Kluck's forced marches. admirable as they were as an achievement, had failed of their consummation in cutting off the French Fifth Army, and that the British army, far from being destroyed, was a protection to the Fifth Army's flank. Yet the plan might be modified by breaking through the French centre, where Franchet d'Esperey and Foch guarded it somewhere in the neighbourhood of Epernay, and striking a similar hammer-blow well to the east in the neighbourhood of Nancy, where the way to Verdun was held by Castelnau and the Second Army. The Allied armies would be cut in two; one half, the western, consisting of the French Fifth, the British, and the French Sixth, would be driven in on Paris; the other half, the eastern, could be pressed back on Verdun. If this eastern half could be, so to speak, immobilized, by the Crown Prince and von Heeringen, then von Bülow (German Second Army) and von Hausen (German Third Army) could push home their advantage in the centre and join von Kluck in rolling up the western group. This was probably not the original German plan, which was one of envelopment by the west, and can only have been adopted on the presumption by the German Great General Staff that a break through at the centre was likely.

This more ambitious movement declared itself on 4th September by a furious attack on Foch's army and on the battle-ground of the Grand Couronné, in front of Nancy. It did not begin badly. The German Crown Prince's attack on General Sarrail (Third French Army) drove back Sarrail's right across the Heights of the Meuse, between Toul and Verdun, and so created that salient of St. Mihiel, east of Verdun, which remained till, in 1918, the American First Army was sent forward by General Foch to flatten it out. But as a whole the battle of the Grand Couronné was a German reverse, and the first indication in the long campaign of the power of dogged resistance which the French could display. But, though this part of the plan failed, there still remained to the Germans on the 5th and 6th September the chance of overwhelming Foch by the combined efforts of von Bülow's (Second) and von Hausen's (Third) Armies. If Foch could be driven back, while the British army and the French Fifth Army were allowed to come forward, then, always supposing von Kluck could envelop and drive back Maunoury, the result would be to catch General French and General Franchet d'Esperey as in a pincers, between von Kluck and von Bülow. The two essentials of this plan were, first, that Foch should be driven in, and, second, that the British should be held while von Kluck was dealing with Maunoury; and the second of these requirements was the more important.

To fulfil it von Kluck sent two army corps (2nd and 4th) northwards on 6th September to attack Maunoury, and by doing so took pressure off the British front. Von Kluck's decision was made in haste, for on the morning of the 6th the British 1st Army Corps saw a column of German infantry, which was moving towards them, face to the right about and go northwards without firing a shot—a phenomenon that led to the not unnatural conviction that the First German Army was in full retreat. It was not; at that moment a change in its dispositions only was in progress. But it had made a mistake. There was nothing to hold the British army back but three cavalry divisions under von Marwitz; and these were not the men to do it. Von Kluck became aware of this, and it was very necessary to him that the British should be held back so as to give some time for dealing with Maunoury.

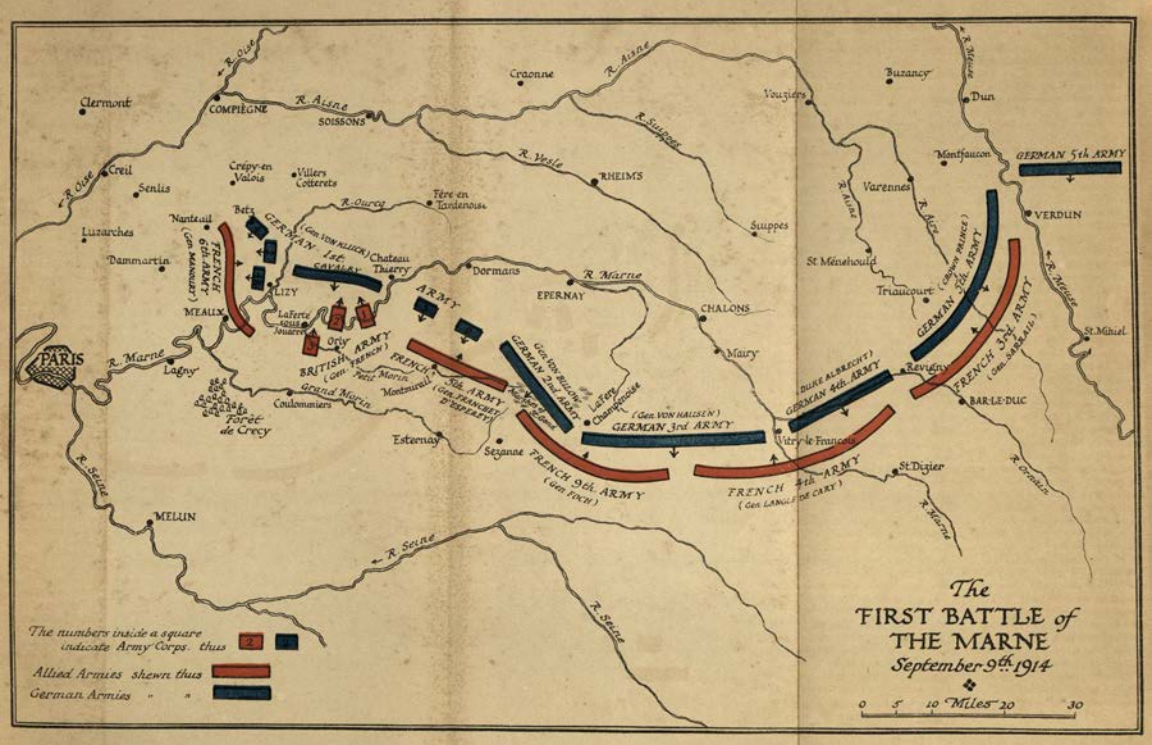
The battle of the 6th and 7th September then became an effort on von Kluck's part to strike down Maunoury with his right arm, while he forced off the British (and the French Fifth Army) with a weakened left. At the same time Foch, fighting desperately east of these operations in the centre of the line, was very slowly—too slowly for the German purpose—being pushed back south of La Fère-Champenoise.

8th September was the day of decision. Maunoury was very hard pressed; some of his troops had been fighting hard since the battle began three days before, and von Kluck was working, with more and more troops, round the French left. But all the while reinforcements were flowing up to Maunoury; some of them had been rushed out of Paris by General Gallieni in motor buses and taxis, and Maunoury held his own well. While he could do so the steady advance of the British and the French Fifth Armies was a constant source of embarrassment to von Kluck. On the 8th the British went on to the Petit Morin, and the German cavalry, though stiffened by some good regiments of German infantry hastily brought up in lorries, could not hold the attack of Allenby's cavalry and Haig's infantry. The German cavalry, fearing to be cut off, retired, leaving their infantry to take care of themselves. Most of these were captured or killed, and at the end of the day (8th) the British were well across the Petit Morin, as were the advanced forces of the French Fifth Army at Montmirail. Von Kluck must by this time have become perturbed; his right arm was not pushing forward fast enough; his left arm was being pushed back too fast. He gave orders to blow up the bridges on the Marne, but his cavalry only destroyed those at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre.

It was a most damaging oversight. Next morning (9th) the British found the bridges west of Château-Thierry unbroken, and no enemy to hold the river. Von Marwitz had, in a phrase, let his commander down; though the fault was not his, but in the imposition on him of a bigger task than his tired horses could compass. The German guns did not open on the British till the 2nd Corps was well over the Marne, and its leading division (3rd) was 4 miles beyond the river, and actually north of the point where, 12 miles to the west, von Kluck's fight with Maunoury was in progress.

It has been pointed out, and even imputed as a blame to General French, that he did not make better use of an opportunity to press right on here with the whole force. But, as a fact, the British 1st Corps and the 2nd Corps right, were held up at Château-Thierry, which the Germans still held; and the 3rd Corps, at the other extremity of the line, could not get across at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, because the bridges had gone and the Germans had not. The delay permitted the Germans to string out another defensive cavalry line, and von Kluck spared some infantry and artillery to strengthen it. The British had some brisk fighting with this improvised line, and captured a battery of howitzers.[1] That was a very inspiriting circumstance for the British; and on the Maunoury front the tide was on the verge of turning in favour of the French. Von Kluck was making a last endeavour with tired troops and not enough ammunition. The German shells were running low. So also was the food. To set against this he had more troops arriving from Belgium to complete the knock-

[1] This signal honour fell to the 1st Batt., Lincolnshire Regt.


The FIRST BATTLE of THE MARNE
September 9th 1914
0 5 10 Miles 20 30
The numbers inside a square indicate Army Corps. thus
Allied Armies shewn thus
German Armies " "
PARIS
Clermont
COMPIÈGNE
SOISSONS
Craonne
Vouziers
Buzancy
Dun
Montfaucon
GERMAN 5th ARMY
VERDUN
Creil
Senlis
Crépy-en-Valois
Villers Cotterets
Fère-en-Tardenoise
RHEIMS
Suippes
Varennes
St Ménehould
Triaucourt
Luzarches
Dammartin
Nanteuil
Betz
GERMAN 1st CAVALRY
(Gen. VON KLUCK)
Chateau Thierry
Dormans
EPERNAY
CHALONS
Maury
Revigny
BAR-LE-DUC
St Mihiel
FRENCH 6th ARMY
(Gen. MANOURY)
LIZY
MEAUX
La Ferté sous Jouarre
Orly
BRITISH ARMY
(Gen. FRENCH)
Petit Morin
FRENCH 5th ARMY
(Gen. FRANCHET D'ESPEREY)
Montmirail
GERMAN 2nd ARMY
(Gen. VON BILLOW)
La Fère Champenoise
GERMAN 3rd ARMY
(Gen. VON HAUSEN)
GERMAN 4th ARMY
(DUKE ALBRECHT)
GERMAN 7th ARMY
(CROWN PRINCE)
FRENCH 3rd ARMY
(Gen. SARRAIL)
Lagny
Coulommiers
Grand Morin
Forêt de Crecy
Esternay
Sezanne
FRENCH 9th ARMY
(Gen. FOCH)
Vitry-le-François
FRENCH 4th ARMY
(Gen. LANRIZAC DE CARY)
St Dizier
MELUN
R. Oise
R. Aisne
R. Suippes
R. Vesle
R. Ourcq
R. Marne
R. Seine
R. Meuse
R. Aire
R. Ornain

out blow—if he could but administer it. Both von Kluck and Maunoury were in the position of boxers who have fought themselves to a standstill, and face one another hardly able to raise a fist for one more blow.

The question was which would collapse first? While von Kluck debated it, his aviators told him that the roads from Paris were crowded with yet more motor-lorries and taxis bringing up General Gallieni's last sou—every soldier that could be collected. The news was too much for von Kluck, coupled as it was with the knowledge that the British were threatening to get behind him. It was he who cracked. At eleven o'clock in the morning he gave the order to retire. His troops went back in good order and fighting.

Von Kluck's share in the German plan had failed. Its failure dragged with it the other ramifications of the scheme. The French Fifth Army had steadily pushed in front of them the insufficient forces of the corps which von Kluck had left to delay them, and at the same time had pressed back the right of von Bülow's army, the bulk of which had been fiercely assailing Foch and the French centre. This success of Franchet d'Esperey allowed him to send his own right corps farther eastwards to Foch's assistance, and this help enabled Foch, in his turn, to withdraw one of his own best divisions—the famous 42nd—and keep it in hand for use at a critical moment. Thus a double movement was in progress, and was leading to a German defeat; on the one hand the Germans were being compelled to withdraw troops from their own centre to the west, and the French were enabled to withdraw troops from the west to their own centre. The German centre, which had been the attacker, was weakening; the French centre, which had bent but had never broken under attack, was strengthening. On the morning of 9th September, the Germans made one last attempt to carry their central plan through by attacking Foch and Langle de Cary on Foch's right. In order to do so von Bülow had to take a risk. He thought, as von Kluck had thought about Maunoury, that one more push might overthrow Foch. Therefore, in order to get the necessary troops for it, he left a gap in his own centre between La Fère Champenoise and the marshes of St. Gond. Thus on the morning of the 9th von Bülow's right was giving way a little before Franchet d'Esperey's 10th Corps (of the Fifth Army); Foch's left wing, next to this, was holding its own in the marshes of St. Gond against the Prussian Guard; and then came the gap.

On the other side of the gap von Bülow's left and von Hausen's right were making their last and supreme effort to roll back Foch. The issue hung in the balance. But Foch had his 42nd Iron Division in hand. The critical moment also was at hand. It came between 5 and 6 o'clock in the afternoon. Foch used both the men and the hour. He flung his Iron Division into the gap against the exposed flank of von Bülow's left wing, and smashed it. At the same time his hard-pressed centre and right came forward again like a released spring. Under this double attack the German centre broke, turned, and fled back northwards, pursued by Foch's infantry and accompanied far into the night by a storm of rain. The Battle of the Marne was won at a stroke; and the whole of the German line from Verdun to Meaux and to Nanteuil had to conform to von Bülow's and von Kluck's retreat.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BATTLES ON THE AISNE LINE

(September–October, 1914)

When in so short a space of time the German march on Paris was reversed, the strategists among the Allies, not yet accustomed to the swayings hither and thither which were to take place, and which, as now may be seen, are inevitable when nations, not armies, are thrown into the struggle, believed that the German effort in spending itself had involved the German armies in irretrievable disaster. It was not so; there is, as President Lincoln once said, "a lot of ruin in a nation"; and the nation of Germany had yet to put forth its reserves of strength. Moreover, as General French, long afterwards admitted, the possibilities of defensive warfare were great, far greater than either side had yet realized, and were increasing. But, as General Joffre's Army Orders at that time show, and as Lord French has declared (in "1914", published in 1919): "we fully believed we were driving the Germans back to the Meuse, if not to the Rhine, and all my correspondence and communications at this time with Joffre, and the French generals most closely associated with me, breathed the same spirit". Joffre's Army Order of 10th September says categorically:

> "The German forces are giving way on the Marne and in Champagne before the Allied armies of the centre and left wing. To confirm and exploit this success, it is necessary to follow up this movement with energy so as to allow the enemy no rest. The offensive movement will therefore be continued along the whole front in a general N.N.E. direction."

For a few days the news from other theatres of war flattered these expectations. The Belgian army had retired behind the entrenched lines of Antwerp, at that time regarded as a model fortress, and had made a successful sortie, which certainly had the effect of impeding the dispatch of German reinforcements to France. The news from Russia raised expectations that there, too, the Germans would find themselves deeply committed. Nor, though signs of any German rout were absent, were these days without material encouragement in captures of men and guns. The French Third Army captured all the artillery of a German corps, and there was no pause in the German retreat before the French Sixth Army, the British army, the French Fifth Army, south of the Aisne. At the same time the French Ninth and Fourth Armies both made considerable progress. By nightfall of 12th September the French Sixth Army had reached the Aisne after some opposition, and the French cavalry on the extreme left were working round Compiègne to threaten the German communications. The British army was also (by next morning) in position south of the Aisne, between Soissons on the west and Bourg on the east. The French Fifth Army on its right was on the line Cormicy-Rheims-Verzy.

It was on the Aisne that the Germans elected to stand; it was here also that they brought into action one of the surprises (though it need not have been) of the campaign, namely, the employment of heavy guns for field purposes. "The first surprise", to quote Lord French, "came when the 'Jack Johnsons' began to fall." The "Jack Johnson", or "Black Maria", was a nickname given to the high-explosive shells fired from 8-inch howitzers brought down from the fortress of Maubeuge, to support the German defensive position on the Aisne. The position was well-suited to defence. The Aisne valley runs east and west, and consists of a flat-bottomed depression, of width varying from half a mile to two miles, down which the river flows a winding course, sometimes nearer the southern heights, sometimes the northern. The high ground is about 400 feet above the floor of the valley, and is broken with numerous spurs. The Chivres spur, on the northern bank, is the most prominent; on the southern bank, the

Sketch Map of Northern France, illustrating the Campaign in the closing months of 1914

Sermoise spur, stands near the Vesle. The river is sluggish, but unfordable, and is spanned by many road bridges—all of them under observation and direct or plunging artillery fire from the northern heights which the Germans held.

In the early hours of 13th September the British attacked the river line along the whole of their front, and by nightfall all the passages, except that at Condé, were held. During the night bridges were thrown over by the engineers, and the British forces got across, and made good progress on the 14th. The best progress was made on the right; the centre and left of the army were not so successful. The 3rd Division, for example, after crossing at Vailly, had nearly reached Aizy, 2½ miles north of the river, when they were driven back by a powerful counter-attack supported by a strong force of heavy artillery. The 5th Division could not advance beyond the northern edge of the Chivres plateau. Before both divisions was a heavy concentration of artillery. The position was, in brief, that the British army had got across the river and had shot forward by its own momentum, but was beginning to find opposition that was strengthening hour by hour. The French Sixth Army was advancing with a wheeling motion, but its right was holding, rather than pushing, the Germans back. The French Fifth Army was heavily engaged all day from the British flank as far as Rheims.

Lord French, as he has since affirmed, became convinced on this day that the Germans had come to a stand; the next day (15th) his opinion strengthened, and it was confirmed by an intercepted German wireless message. Reinforcements (6th Division) were coming up to him, but he was not satisfied with his position for various reasons; his losses were accumulating; the enemy's artillery was markedly stronger; the British were short of machine-guns and the artillery lost at Le Cateau. The day had not been without its promises and disappointments. The 1st Corps had been heavily attacked throughout the day. It beat the attacks off at a good deal of cost to itself; and towards evening a temporary retirement of German infantry and cavalry renewed the hopes of a continued German retreat. It did not take place, and the British Commander, feeling more and more sure that his own army would not get through, began to turn his eyes, as others did, to General Maunoury on the west. What actually happened is precisely and illuminatingly told in Lord French's own narrative of "1914":

> "On the 16th I went to see General Maunoury at his head-quarters. I found him watching an attack of the 61st and 62nd Divisions (French) on the village of Nouvron and the plateau above it . . . From all I could see the French appeared to be getting on very well. On my way back I visited the Corps Commanders and they all expressed the utmost confidence in their ability to hold their positions. After my return to Headquarters the liaison officer with the Sixth Army reported to me. His accounts were disappointing after my experience with Maunoury. He said that the 13th French Corps had been checked south-west of Noyon by a night attack of troops from the 9th German Reserve Corps, which was said to have reached Noyon from Belgium. Here was another incident in that continual 'flanking' and 'outflanking' manœuvre which was to cease only at the sea."

Lord French was right in the conclusion which he then formed. This was that, despite phantom retirements and expected retreats by the Germans, there would be no further success to be attained by a frontal attack at any part of their line, and that any attempt to turn their flank would be countered at once, and might be dangerous to the aggressor. Nowhere was there any sign of a German break. Their line recrossed the Aisne at Berry-au-Bac, where it was now opposite General Foch, who had followed the German up through Rheims and across the Suippe, only to be counter-attacked thereafter, and to be unable to retain those heights at Nogent l'Abbesse, whence the Germans shelled Rheims for four ensuing years. From Rheims the Allied line, already beginning to fall into entrenchments, stretched eastwards through the Argonne and formed a salient round Verdun, the hinge of the French defence. It then turned southwards through the plain of the Woevre, where the Bavarians were facing the heights of the Meuse.

On the 17th the British 1st Corps was heavily but unsuccessfully attacked; the French 18th Corps lost Craonne, though they still clung to a great part of the Chemin des Dames; a reserve French division cap-

FRENCH TROOPS MARCHING TO THE MARNE, 1914

From a photograph taken in a vineyard in Northern France within sound of the guns of the contending armies

tured two battalions of the Prussian Guard in Berry-au-Bac; and a French cavalry corps made a valuable raid on the German communications as far as Ham and St. Quentin. These operations, with their attendant successes and disappointments, were typical of the situation. General Joffre at this juncture endeavoured to put into operation on a more substantial basis the manœuvre of outflanking the German line. The French Sixth Army was ordered to assume a defensive line from Soissons to Bailly pending the formation of another army under de Castelnau, brought over from Nancy. This army of four corps (4th, 14th, 13th, and 20th) was to concentrate at once to the north-west of Noyon. It was intended to operate in an easterly direction. These operations, though they were not successful in turning the enemy's flank, were effective in changing the line of battle from "east and west" to "north and south", and built the first section of that great besieging wall, which was destined to prove an impenetrable barrier between the Germans and their main objective—of which Paris and Amiens were the first, and Calais and the Channel ports the second. The credit for this manœuvre belongs to General Joffre. His staunch admirer, Lord French, remarks that Joffre, in directing it as he did, must be credited with one of these flashes of military genius which have never been surpassed.

Meanwhile the British troops on the north side of the Aisne, in proximity to the Chemin des Dames, were being very hard pressed. The brunt of the German attacks fell on Sir Douglas Haig and the 1st Army Corps. Sir Douglas Haig's troops held on pertinaciously in spite of repeated attacks, which cost the Germans some 7000 men in killed alone, but the British losses were not light, and the heavy artillery was making the position very difficult. It is not a little interesting that, according to Lord French's own admission, in the opinion of one very good judge, namely himself, the probabilities of making any impression on the German defensive positions were already beginning to seem shadowy, and he had a feeling, which shortly afterwards expressed itself in action, that it behoved the Allies to guard the Channel ports while they could still be protected—the British army preferably being deputed for the task. Nevertheless, at this period there were flickers of expectation that even yet the Germans might be uprooted. General Maunoury (22nd September) wrote to General French saying that the Germans were certainly falling back from his front, and that he intended to advance and attack on the 23rd. The Fifth French Army, on the British right, was also planning an attack, and the British linked up the efforts of both. But little progress was made, and the focus of action moved farther east, to de Castelnau and the Second French Army. De Castelnau made fair progress during the last week of September on the line from Ribecourt to Bray-sur-Somme; but at the beginning of October he was being counter-attacked and was practically at a standstill.

At this date the British Commander-in-Chief had made up his mind as to the action most appropriate to the capability and temper of the British Expeditionary Force, and suggested (29th September) that it should be moved to the west of General Maunoury and the Sixth French Army. Here, reinforced by the 7th Division, and within a few weeks by other divisions, bringing it up to a total of 10 divisions (5 corps) and 4 cavalry divisions, its power of initiative would be greater, and it would be nearer its lines of communication with the British Isles. We shall not, perhaps, be doing Lord French an injustice in supposing that he felt he would be in a more independent position if he were in liaison with one section only of the French line instead of two. In his note to General Joffre suggesting the re-arrangement the British Commander pointed out that he had built up trench lines on both sides of the Aisne, and that the removal of his army, and the substitution of a French one in its place, would not be difficult or dangerous. General Joffre in his reply agreed that "for nearly fifteen days the armies of the centre have been *accrochées* to the ground without making any real advance"—an important indication of the German intentions, as afterwards could be plainly seen. General Joffre added that on his right the Third and First French Armies had been fighting hard, and the

Second French Army, on the extreme left, was being furiously attacked. The inference was that the Germans still entertained the hope of enveloping the Allied wings.

In principle, General Joffre assented to General French's propositions, postponing, however, the date of the re-arrangement and suggesting his own methods of effecting it. The westward movement of the British forces was fixed to begin on 3rd October. Before the march could begin, the situation, and the necessity, which was in General French's mind, of covering the Channel ports had become more acute. Antwerp was in danger of falling, and the Belgian War Council had decided that the Belgian Field Army, under the command of King Albert, would withdraw from Antwerp in the direction of Ghent to protect the coast line, and to aim at co-operating with the Allied armies. General French believed that with Antwerp as a base there would be no unsuperable obstacle to an immediate German advance on Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne; and it remained his considered opinion that the Germans could have overwhelmed the Belgian army and captured the coast line had they at once seized the opportunity presented to them.

On the same day (3rd October) General French received two other pieces of important information, the first that the Indian contingent was arriving at Orleans, the second that the 21st French Corps had begun to detrain west of Lille. This corps formed the left of the French army, under de Maud'huy, which was concentrating to the north of de Castelnau to carry out the attempted movement to outflank the Germans by the north. The armies under de Castelnau and de Maud'huy formed a group directed by General Foch. General French's northward *chassé croisés* now began. The 2nd Corps was the first to begin to move, accompanied by the 1st Cavalry Division. By the 8th of October the 2nd Corps had nearly completed their detrainment at Abbeville, to which General French's Head-quarters were removed. The 3rd Corps had been relieved on the Aisne by French troops, and their entrainment at Compiègne was proceeding. During these days the Germans were pressing de Castelnau hard. By the 9th the British movement was in full swing, the 2nd Corps, preceded by cavalry, being timed to reach the line Aire-Bethune on the 11th, the 3rd Corps to detrain at St. Omer on the 12th. The cavalry was under General Allenby, timed to reach Aire by the 10th. News had been received from Rawlinson, in command of the 7th Division sent to aid the Belgians. Antwerp had fallen on the 9th, and the withdrawal of the British troops from Belgium, no less than the withdrawal of the Naval Brigade from Antwerp, was accompanied by great difficulties. General French directed Rawlinson (4th Corps) to hold the Lys if he could and await connection. De Maud'huy with the French army under him was meanwhile having to fight hard to keep his position, but he promised to hold a line to Bethune till Smith-Dorrien and the 2nd Corps could get up. Instructions were sent to Allenby and his cavalry to act on the 2nd Corps' left front.

Foch and French then agreed on a combined advance east, which was by the 13th to make the line Lille-Courtrai, Foch's left securing the passage of the Deûle at Lille, the British centre to be directed towards Courtrai, holding the Lys there. The 4th Corps and the Belgians were to be on the left of the advance. By the 11th (morning) Allenby's cavalry had cleared the Germans out of the forest of Nieppe, south of Hazebrouck; the 2nd Corps had reached the line by the canal, and were directed to move east so as to join up with the immediate left of the Tenth French Army. The 3rd Corps had one division moving on Hazebrouck. Allenby's cavalry continued to do good work on the 11th and 12th and following days, making a great sweep to the north and north-east, and driving the Germans in front of them. Gough's cavalry division captured the Mont des Cats in front of (north) Hazebrouck, and de Lisle's division halted in front of Merris. By the 14th the cavalry had reached the area, Kemmel, Wytschaete, Messines. The 3rd Corps (Pulteney) was moving up behind them, and on the 13th captured Bailleul and Meteren; by the 15th they reached the line Sailly-Nieppe. Between

the 11th and 15th the 4th Corps, under Rawlinson, was constantly engaged as he fell back towards General French in assisting and covering the retreat of the Belgian army—the 7th Division (Capper) retiring successively through Ghent, Aeltre, Roulers, to Ypres.

On the 15th this division was east of Ypres, with the 3rd Cavalry Division (Byng) well in front of them. The three cavalry divisions had secured Mont Kemmel, and this was a position of immense importance in the subsequent operations about Ypres. On the 15th, too, the retreating Belgian army, which had assembled in the area Ostend, Dixmude, Furnes, Nieuport, withdrew behind the line of the Yser to the north of Ypres; and with Rawlinson's 4th Corps now in touch, and the French Naval Division, which also had assisted the Belgian retreat, at Dixmude and Nieuport, the line to the coast was complete. The 2nd Corps had some hard fighting to establish its position on the line Annequin, Festubert, Vieille-Chapelle, Fosse; and, with the arrival of the 1st Corps at St. Omer from the Aisne, General French's removal of the British Expeditionary Force to the positions about Ypres, which they were to occupy so long and at such a cost, was complete.

It is necessary in order to complete this review of the position to recapitulate the course of events as they affected the armies in Belgium. By, and after, 20th August the main Belgian army had been disposed on the Rivers Rupel and Nethe, which formed an outermost defensive line about Antwerp. Its function there had been to attract to itself and detain the greatest possible number of German forces. Up to the 25th of September the German forces opposed to the Belgians were not superior in number to them, but after that date the position changed. After 21st August the bulk of the German troops had turned south towards the Sambre (where the battle of the Sambre and the engagement at Mons took place) and only the 3rd and 9th Reserve Corps had been left in front of Antwerp. The Belgian army made sorties and sustained counter-attacks. On the 4th September (almost the eve of the Battle of the Marne) the Germans marched on Termonde, south-west of Antwerp on the Scheldt, crossed the river and threatened the westward line of retreat of the Belgians. This movement was checked and the Germans recrossed the river. On the 9th of September, when the Battle of the Marne was in effect decided, the Belgian High Command ordered another series of sorties which lasted till the 12th, and compelled the Germans to bring up reinforcements. Other minor sorties were made, but the Germans, in possession of an excellent network of railways, had little difficulty in reinforcing themselves, and towards the 25th of September their preparations for the siege of Antwerp were nearing completion. Consequently, when on that day the Belgians, in response to a request from General Joffre, prepared to attack the German communications—about which the Germans were, and had been, extremely nervous—the operation reduced itself to a threatening movement in the direction of Termonde. The siege of Antwerp began on 28th September and by 6th October having forced the line of the Nethe and crossed the Dendre, which falls into the Scheldt at Termonde, the situation of the Belgian army had become very precarious.

The threat was two-fold. Up to the beginning of October the chief danger was that of being surrounded by the German army besieging Antwerp. But by the 13th of September the German retreat from the Marne had brought the German mass on to the Aisne. From that moment the outflanking manœuvres of the Germans and the Allies had resulted in the prolongation of the German line (by 1st October) from Lassigny to Lille, only 38 miles from the sea. If it had been prolonged much farther it would have cut off the Belgian army from any junction with the Franco-British forces. Ghent must therefore be held to protect a Belgian retreat, and its occupation was urged on the French and British cabinets on 4th October. Two days later the Belgian High Command judged that a retreat from Antwerp was urgent; and by the 7th October the Belgian army was moving westward. There was ample reason. The Scheldt had been forced by the Germans south of Termonde; and advanced German forces were

approaching on unoccupied Ghent from the south. On 8th October the Germans began to get in touch with the retreating Belgians at Lokeren, between the Scheldt and the Dutch frontier. The Germans were bringing up yet more divisions on the following day, when the British 7th Division, and a small French force, opportunely arrived at Ghent and held its approaches. The Germans, threatened on their left flank, became thus unable to press forward to squeeze the Belgians towards the Dutch frontier, and had to permit their continued retreat westwards. There were two defensive lines on which the retreating army could rest: the Ghent-Terneuzen canal prolonged by the Scheldt, and the Schipdonck canal, prolonged by the Lys. But by now the German Antwerp siege army was coming up, together with four new army corps freshly arrived in Belgium, the 22nd, 23rd, 26th, and 27th Reserve Corps. The Belgian Army Command, feeling that even with French and British co-operation it could not hold the more advanced line, continued its retreat to the Yser. It arrived there, skilfully led, by 15th October. It had been reduced to 82,000 men (48,000 rifles). The French front was prepared for defence in this area as far as La Bassée. The French and British troops together here were shortly to be attacked by the German siege army and the four fresh corps, whose appearance was such an unpleasant surprise to General French. The line between La Bassée and the sea was thinly held, and the arrival of the British 2nd and 3rd Army Corps left it still with a heavy task after 17th October, when the British and French troops began to take up positions from Ypres to the sea.

The British attempts to help the Belgian army in its stand had not been in all respects fortunate. The least gratifying episode was that connected with the dispatch of a brigade of Royal Marines and part of the recently formed Naval Division (under General Paris) to Antwerp. They were sent at once into the trenches, and three battalions of the Naval Division stayed there till the surrender of Antwerp on 9th October. About 800 of the Naval Division were made prisoners and another 1500 were pushed in the retreat across the Dutch frontier and interned in Holland.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DEFENCE OF THE CHANNEL PORTS

(October–December, 1914)

If the British had delayed too long on the Aisne, to the neglect of guarding the flank of the Allied line where it stretched westwards to the sea, the Germans lost an opportunity, such as was never again vouchsafed to them, to outflank the Allies by reinforcing their right in the same direction before de Castelnau's movement could develop. They chose as an alternative to attack the British and French forces to the east (instead of to the west) of Ypres, with the double object of cutting the Allied line and of driving the British and French forces towards the sea —instead of cutting them off from it. It is an interesting circumstance that, if the Germans threw away their opportunity, the Allies were hardly persuaded that it was there to be thrown away, for General French and General Foch were alike in believing during the first fortnight of October, 1914, that the German bolt had been shot; and that the initiative in a proffered turning movement north of Ypres rested with the British and French forces.

Even when it was reported between the 10th and 15th October that the Germans were directing a powerful offensive movement between Ypres and the Yser, General French retained sufficient confidence to base his plan on a British attack. Smith-Dorrien and the 2nd Corps were directed to continue the movement to the east; Pulteney and

the 3rd Corps were to make good the river Lys between Armentières and Sailly-sur-Lys; Allenby was to take his cavalry towards Menin; Rawlinson was to move towards Courtrai. On the 16th October these movements were in progress, but the progress was not considerable. Its want of rapidity impressed General French; and he appealed to General Foch for assistance, if assistance could be given. But Armentières and the Bois Grenier were captured by the 18th. General French's doubts were increasing. The French troops on the Yser were not strong, the Belgians were tired out, the British cavalry in that neighbourhood were also very weary; farther south the enemy was hourly growing stronger in front of the 2nd and 3rd Corps, whose endurance had been heavily taxed. The British line was extended over too wide a front; it had no reserves. General French's apprehensions were shared by de Maud'huy, who also saw the danger that a wedge might be driven between his forces and the British.

Such a wedge, south of Menin, would have been an irreparable disaster. and thus uncomparably greater than a possible break through by the Germans farther north. The British Commander-in-Chief therefore decided to throw the balance of his effort in a counter-attack on the Ypres-Yser front, and in doing so took a decision which is one of the landmarks of the war, and which in the opinion of history will surely entitle the British Commander to be called a great soldier. He had two risks to face, and he took the greater. If he had lost the Channel Ports the disaster would have been immense, but not irreparable; if he had been separated from the French by a German wedge, there would have been an end to the British Expeditionary Force. It was this second peril that he determined to avert at all costs.

Sir Douglas Haig, with the 1st Corps, was instructed to advance towards Thorout, making every effort to turn the German left flank, then guarded, it was supposed, by the 3rd German Reserve Corps only. With the assistance of the French and Belgians on the north, and Rawlinson's 4th Corps on the south, it was hoped that Haig might be able to thrust back this corps and so upset the German plans. To some extent this courageous strategy may have been effective in confusing the Germans' intentions, but they continued their activity in the north, heavily attacking the Belgians at Nieuport, and also advancing through Roulers to force back the British cavalry on Messines. By the 21st General French's apprehensions of their increasing strength were confirmed. The comparatively small German force of one corps had grown in three days to four—the 21st, 22nd, 26th, and 27th Reserve Corps—not the best German troops, but formidable in numbers. Their sudden appearance was a thunderbolt; and the only reason the British Commander had for reassurance was that his direction of the 1st Corps towards the neighbourhood of this German concentration had been sound. There remained no question, of course, of any British offensive; a stern defence till relief could come was the only prospect visible. Some idea of the task laid on the British troops may be gained from a statement of their dispositions on 21st October. Beginning from the right they were disposed as follows:—

2nd Corps—6 miles.
French cavalry—1 mile.
3rd Corps—12 miles.
Cavalry corps—4 miles.
4th Corps—6 miles.
1st Corps—7 miles.

Beyond these, on a front of 20 miles, were French Territorials, a French cavalry corps (de Mitry), Belgians, and French Marines. The British 1st Corps (Haig) which joined up with these occupied its line Zonnebeke-Langemarck-Bixschoote on the 21st after hard fighting. Against the thinly held front the Germans had the 7th Corps, the 19th Corps, the 18th Corps, a division of the 13th Corps, the 27th Corps, the 26th, 23rd, and 22nd Corps, the 3rd Reserve Corps and an Ersatz division—practically 9 corps. The positions occupied by the British were not taken up without difficulty, and there was some confusion caused, in front of Haig and the 1st Corps, by the unexpected withdrawal of the French cavalry to the west bank of the Ypres canal. This confusion had, however, one good result in

determining the evacuation of Ypres by the French troops therein, and the proper covering of the British left flank. The opening phases of the Battle of Ypres may be said to have lasted from the 21st to the 26th October, and in these five days the northern portion of the British line advanced a little in spite of the weight against them, and inflicted heavy losses on the Germans. To the south, between Zonnebeke and La Bassée, a certain amount of ground was lost; but the troops held staunchly to their positions. At midnight on the 22nd both Pulteney and Smith-Dorrien were anxious about their positions. On the evening of the 23rd the 1st Corps withstood the culmination of some very fierce attacks. They estimated that in the three days, inclusive, by this attack the Germans had lost 8000 men without gaining ground. Summing up the first phase of the battle it might be said that, while all hope of driving in the German flank had faded, the battle-line which was to be held so long in the northern section by the Allies was defined and established.

In this narrative of the Battle of Ypres should be interpolated the enforced retirement of the French from Lille and the part played by the Belgians. De Maud'huy (Tenth French Army) had made an attempt to save it, while it was still held by French Territorials, by advancing through the mining district north-east of Arras, but he found the Germans in force at Douai and had to fall back. Lille, subjected to a heavy and unnecessary bombardment, surrendered on 13th October. It was an important railway junction, and its loss was evidence of the German recovery. From Lille and Douai they advanced on Arras, which the French had temporarily to evacuate. A battalion of the Prussian Guard entered the town but were driven out, and though other German attacks were made till the end of October the town remained finally in the possession of the Allies.

The Belgians had to bear a very determined thrust by the Germans at the very outset of the First Battle of Ypres. They were holding a region intersected by ditches, canals, and streams, and on a front of 22 miles the only reserves they could command were the infantry brigades and one cavalry division. The German attack began here on 18th October on the front Nieuport-Dixmude. On the 19th the German attacks were launched against the left and centre from Lombaertzyde to Beerst. Attacks continued on the 20th, and on the 21st the concentration of the German forces brought a total of 7 divisions against the Belgian army. Most of the Belgian reserves had been thrown in, in order to maintain their positions. By nightfall the Germans were across the Lys and had established bridge-heads. The Belgians, though holding on with great determination, were pressed farther and farther back, and sent urgently for French help. The French 42nd Division enabled a rally to be made, but the assaults on the almost exhausted Belgian line went on uninterruptedly till the 25th, when there was a lull. By that date 10,000 Belgians had been wounded, in addition to the dead and wounded lying on the battle-field.

By this time the optimism of the French commanders had been tempered by facts as they presented themselves, and General Joffre had sent the French 9th Corps to assist the British in holding the Ypres salient. The second phase of this battle began on 27th October and lasted five days, a period which Lord French has described as more momentous and fateful than any others during which he commanded in France. "31st October and 1st November will remain for ever memorable in the history of our country, for, during these two days, no more than one thin and straggling line of tired-out British soldiers stood between the Empire and its practical ruin as a first-class independent Power." On the 27th Haig sent a message to French about the exhausted condition of the 7th Division (Capper). It was attached temporarily to Haig's 1st Corps and took over the ground south of the Ypres-Menin road. Meanwhile the Germans were pouring in troops till, by the end of October, they had 12 corps opposed to the wearied 7 corps of the Allies, and enjoyed, moreover, an enormous artillery superiority both in numbers and weight of guns. The 28th saw the loss of Neuve Chapelle by Smith-Dorrien's 2nd

Corps, which was being severely tried; and on that day de Maud'huy, on the British right, sent in a message to say he was very anxious about his left flank. The set-off to these anxieties was a success of the 6th Division, just south of Armentières, in beating off a severe German counter-attack.

On 29th August, the first critical day, the centre of the Ypres salient, held by the 1st and 7th Divisions, was attacked in the neighbourhood of Gheluvelt by large masses of the enemy, who drove the British back on the village. By nightfall a counter-attack had recovered the ground, and the position then ran roughly as follows: — The two assailed British divisions held a line from a point north of the Ypres-Menin road, where the 7th joined up with the cavalry under Allenby on the Wytschaete-Messines ridge. The other in the northerly direction, extended to the west of Reutel and Poezelhoek, and was continued to the east of Zonnebeke station by the 2nd Corps, where the 9th French Corps took it on. General Foch, it may be noted, was on this day still sanguine that an Allied advance would yet be possible, but, according to General French, no longer agreed with some of his colleagues in opposing the inundation of the low-lying lands about the Yser to the sea; he was, on the contrary, in favour of the inundation.

At dawn on 30th October the 19th Brigade carried out a brilliant counter-attack which threw back the Germans on the right of the 3rd Corps. But an hour later Haig was heavily shelled all along his front, and on the cavalry divisions holding the ground in and around Hollebeke the enemy fell with the fiercest fury of all. By the evening the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions had been compelled to fall back to the canal, leaving the enemy in possession of Hollebeke, and the 1st Cavalry Division, heavily pressed at Messines, had lost the village and won it again. North of Haig and on the Yser the heavy fighting during the whole of the day left the situation unchanged. The line of the 11th Brigade (4th Division) was broken, but the ground was recaptured. The situation was already serious, and Foch promised to send up French infantry and artillery in support of Haig and the 1st Corps.

It was necessary, for at dawn on 31st October a heavy infantry attack on the left of the 4th Division in the valley of the Douve was the prelude to concentrated German assaults between Gheluvelt and Messines. Quite early Messines was lost again, and the attack was the first pressed against the right of the 1st Cavalry Division, and subsequently against the 2nd Cavalry Division. The French supports were sent forward in a counter-attack a little before midday; but the battle, fiercest about and in Messines, went on all day and hardly ceased to hang in the balance of victory or defeat till nightfall. The situation in front of the 1st Corps at Gheluvelt was equally menacing and critical. A little after midday the German attack against Gheluvelt reached its highest development, and the line of the 1st Division was broken there. They were reported to the Commander-in-Chief to be falling back along the main road, and to General French the news seemed at that moment catastrophic:

> "To me, indeed," he afterwards wrote, "it seemed as though our line at last was broken. If this were the case the immense numerical superiority of the enemy would render retreat a very difficult operation, particularly in view of the fact that Ypres and the Yser lay in our immediate rear. Our only hope now seemed to be to make a stand on the line Ypres-Messines: but it was a great question whether this would be possible in face of a close and determined pursuit. The last barrier between the Germans and the Channel seaboard seemed to have broken down."

Happily these forebodings were relieved by an unexpected and, as it seemed at the moment, a miraculous recovery on the part of the 1st Division, which rallied on the line of the woods east of the bend of the Menin road. The Germans had been checked by an enfilade fire from the north; a counter-attack had been delivered by the 1st (Guards) Brigade, and the right of the 2nd Division and the 1st Division advanced to the attack once more. Gheluvelt was re-taken with the bayonet in the afternoon. The moving spirit in this remarkable counter-attack, which restored connection between the 1st and 7th Division and almost restored the original line, was Brigadier-General Fitz-Clarence, V.C., commanding the 1st Guards Brigade (1st Division); and the rally coalesced

about the 2nd Worcesters (5th Brigade, 2nd Division) and the Berkshires whom he sent forward in accordance with plan. General FitzClarence was killed about a fortnight later in the same part of the field.

This extremely close shave thoroughly awakened General Foch to the gravity of the situation, and on the urgent representations of General French he agreed to send by next morning a French mixed force of the strength of a division to concentrate on the line St. Eloi-Wytschaete, thence advancing to attack the left flank of the Germans on Haig's right front. The 9th French Corps on Haig's left was similarly to attack south-east against the enemy's right. 31st October had been the great day for Britain, perhaps the greatest, but the danger was not past. During the following night the 2nd Cavalry Division was heavily attacked all along the Wytschaete-Messines ridge. The Germans got into Wytschaete, broke through the lines north of Messines, and forced the London Scottish, despite a desperate defence, back towards Wulverghem. A counter-attack re-established the line at 3 o'clock in the morning; another German attack at 6 o'clock drove back the 2nd Cavalry Division and took Wytschaete again. This loss, coupled with the seizure of the ridge north of Messines, forced the 1st Cavalry Division back conformably to an entrenched line north of Wulverghem.

Thus here a situation had been reached not unlike that at Gheluvelt the day before. Since 30th October the cavalry corps and the troops attacked had been holding on, bleeding and exhausted, to the Wytschaete-Messines ridge against overwhelming numbers. The French troops, marching up to help them, were still some way off, and other troops sent from Bailleul were also not yet within reach. At 10 a.m. of 1st November the 2nd Cavalry Division was retiring on Mont Kemmel, which they were in no condition to hold if the Germans came up after them hard enough. Then it was that once again interposition came at the eleventh hour. Some battalions of French infantry attacked on the left of the 2nd Cavalry Division and checked the enemy's advance. The German momentum was arrested, and their troops held off till the head of the 16th French Army Corps arrived, and, at once attacking, regained the western end of Wytschaete. The position of the 3rd Corps, which had also been rendered precarious by the loss of Messines, was strengthened by the arrival of the troops sent from Bailleul, and its commander (Pulteney) was able to draw back his left towards Neuve-Eglise and form a flank facing north and protecting an important artillery position. It was able also to threaten to take in flank the German advance on the Wytschaete-Messines ridge. At midday then the situation was as follows: the 1st Cavalry Division was in an entrenched position running east and north-east of Wulverghem, in touch on the right with the re-constructed line of Pulteney's 3rd Corps, and on the left with the 2nd Cavalry Division. The 2nd Cavalry Division, stiffened by the French advance, was drawn in to the south of Wytschaete, in touch with the 16th French Corps holding the western end of Wytschaete.

The 1st Corps, so hard pressed the day before, was again bitterly attacked. Part of it was driven from its trenches, but came back to them again. It held. But its losses had been very heavy, and the 7th Division was left only 2000 strong. The 3rd Cavalry Division was thrown in to help it; and no praise can be too high for the part which the cavalry played during these two days of most imminent danger to the British line. Nor must the share taken by the 16th French Corps be ignored. Had they arrived but an hour later on Sunday, 1st November, the German advance would have so gained in volume and impetus that nothing could have saved Mont Kemmel, or have prevented them from driving a wedge into the middle of the British line. Such a wedge at such a point would have cut off all the British, French, and Belgian troops lying to the north of an east-and-west line through Mont Kemmel, and would have hemmed them in against the coast, there to be destroyed or captured.

The worst of the crisis was over, though it may not have seemed to be so at the time, for anxious days followed. On 2nd November the 16th French Corps which Foch had lent, and a French Cavalry Division (Con-

*French Official Photograph*

IN WAR-WRECKED YPRES

All that is left of the once beautiful Cloth Hall

neau's) with the 1st British Cavalry Division in support, were holding the Wytschaete-Messines ridge, and a very hard task they had, for the Germans persistently attacked, and the fight swayed backwards and forwards. The British 1st Corps (1st and 2nd Division and 7th Division) was also almost at the extremity of its effort. Foch could send no more men to support it, and all that could be done was to patch its worn line up with part of the 2nd Division. With the help of these the shattered 7th Division, reduced to the strength of less than a brigade, was sent back to billets for rest. Some anxiety was felt about the Indian corps, but these troops also justified the confidence reposed in them; and no break occurred. In the reaction of mind resulting from escape from disaster, the belief sprang up and flourished for a few days that the Germans were again withdrawing. The idea was in part fostered by the report of Russian successes in the Eastern theatre of war, but it had no substantial foundation. Fortunately it did not interfere with the detrainment of strong French reinforcements, including the 20th Corps, in the Ypres area on 4th and 5th November. British Territorial units, including the Artist's Rifles, the Honourable Artillery Company, the Queen's Westminsters, Hertfordshire and Warwickshire Territorials, were also now arriving in France to join the London Scottish, who had already done well.

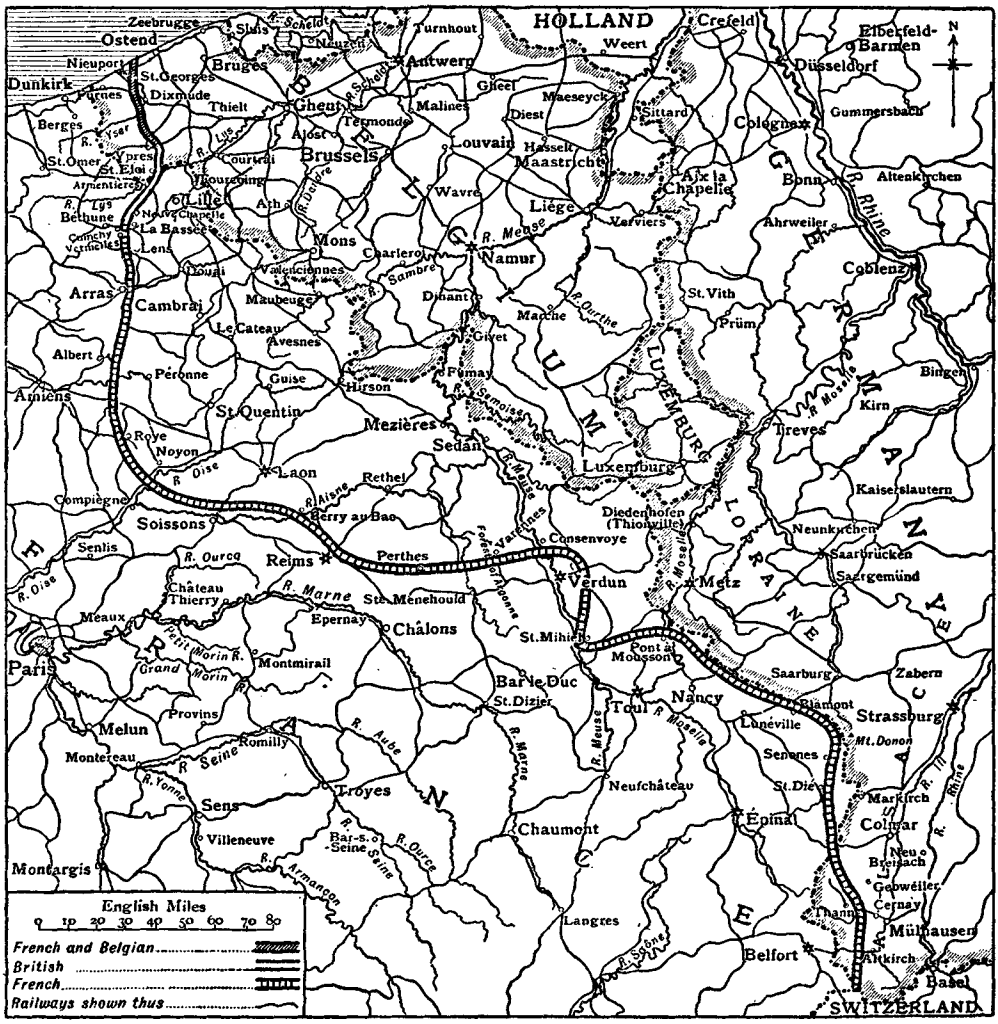
There was no great attack for some days after this, though fighting went on with varying success all along the line from La Bassée to the sea. A conference between Foch and French was held on 8th November, in which the spirit of optimism was still in the ascendant; but on the 10th all hopes of an advance were dissipated by Foch's report to French that an attack on a great scale had begun on the French and Belgian lines from Ypres to the sea. The Germans had thrown in five fresh corps brought up from the south, captured Dixmude, and were fighting for the line of the Yser. Early on the morning of the 11th, Haig reported that he was being heavily shelled and that two fresh German army corps, the Prussian Guard and the 15th Corps were ranged against him.

The attack of 11th November, and the repulse by Haig's 1st Corps, rank with those that preceded it as the most historic in the story of the defence of the Ypres salient. The first assault was made along the Menin road on the front held by the 1st (Guards), 7th, and 15th Brigades. The line was almost overwhelmed by weight of numbers; it was pierced, but it was restored. At noon the critical point changed to the right, where the French were driven out of their trenches, and fell back on Verbranden Molen. General Vidal called on General Haig for help, and though the heavy fighting on the Menin road had used up most of the 1st Corps reserves, sufficient help was forthcoming to enable the French to hold their own, though, to British and French fighting side by side, the situation remained full of anxiety all day. In the early afternoon a fresh attack of great violence was delivered farther north against the 5th Brigade; and about 3 p.m. the Prussian Guard was massed in the woods about the Menin road for what was meant to be the culminating assault. The assault, however, was caught in an enfilading fire before it could get fully under way, and from their initial discomfiture the enemy never really recovered. Severe fighting continued till darkness set in; the defence was most severely tested, and the defenders lost very heavily. The Guards Brigade was left with only 4 officers and 300 men, and other units suffered in hardly a less degree. But the enemy's losses very greatly exceeded these, and they were paid without effecting their object. The line, save for a few trenches, was left unbroken, and scarcely bent, and this, the culminating German effort in 1914 to break through, ended in failure.

In the north, on the British left, the struggle which had lasted during the last fortnight in October had compelled the French Higher Command to adopt the expedient of flooding the country to prevent a German advance. The chief incidents in it may be briefly recapitulated. The line on the north side of the Ypres salient was held by two French divisions, which had resisted all the German attacks at Bixschoote and Langemarck. French Territorials and Marines continued the line to Dixmude;

between Dixmude and the sea the Belgians lined the Yser canal. On the 18th October von Bülow seized the bridge-head at Nieuport, but could advance no farther. Some British monitors, mounted with 6-inch guns, shelled the Germans from the sea; and the German troops made their next effort farther east, at St. Georges, where they crossed the river on 24th and 25th October, and drove the Belgians back to the railway embankment. The Yser had been dammed near Nieuport. On the 28th it overflowed, and the Germans found themselves up to the knees in water. The Belgians retired behind the railway, and though the Germans stormed the embankment and took Ramscapelle, they were driven back into the floods on 31st October by the Belgian and French Colonial troops. The sluices were then opened wide. Many hundreds of Germans were drowned in the rising floods, and the impossibility was demonstrated of any advance along the coast line.

From this time onwards trench warfare on the Western Front became the established character of the operations, broken only




"Joffre's Wall": the Allies' line in France and Belgium at the beginning of February, 1915—six months after the declaration of war

by attempts, always costly and usually futile, to restore to it the aspect of mobile tactics. The French official account of the first six months of the war, published early in 1915, remarked that from 30th November, 1914, to February, 1915, the French Higher Command had not thought it advisable to embark on offensive operations. It confined itself to local attacks, the main object of which was to hold in front of our armies as large a number of German corps as possible, and thus to hinder the withdrawal of the troops which the German General Staff was anxious to dispatch to Russia. Germany, during this period, maintained some 47 army corps on the Western Front (out of the 52 which were there when the last attempt was made to reach the Channel ports). The reasons for the absence of offensive operations on the part of the Allies is ascribed in part to the climatic conditions, which, in the unusually rainy winter of 1914–15, were such as to diminish the effectiveness of offensive operations and to add to the costliness of any undertaken. Lord French has more frankly stated the reason for quiescence as attributable to the comprehension borne in on himself, as on the French, that "given forces fairly equally matched you can bend but you cannot break your enemy's trench line". That principle is not novel in military history; it cannot be evaded, though it may be modified by the ability of either side to mass a great preponderance of men at given points of attack, as indeed was shown when, with smaller forces numerically, Haig crumpled up the Hindenburg trench line at Cambrai in the closing months of the war. A more impregnable obstacle to an Allied success in offensive operations was the shortage in ammunition, which was acute, and remained so for many months, as well as in heavy guns and machine-guns.

The French Higher Command, therefore, attempted very little during the winter beyond local operations. General Joffre's daily *communiqué* usually contained one sentence: "From the Argonne to the Vosges there is nothing to report", which was typical of the stagnation, and has a better foundation in fact than the other sentence attributed to him that he was limiting himself to "nibbling" the enemy. But it was true that the Allies at this time were reposing confidence on two hopes, the first that the German offensive in the West was broken, and that the German defensive must be in its turn broken by the accumulating reinforcements of the British armies; and the second that the Russian offensive, increasingly successful in Galicia and the Carpathians, after a preliminary disaster in East Poland, must eventually compel the Germans to withdraw forces from the West to the East. In the meantime there were certain facts, minimized by the Allies at the time, but significant that the Germans were very far from being exhausted. The first was a very well planned German attack north-east of Soissons, which swept the French local troops from a bridge-head on the Aisne, and long after was to make its effect noticeable in the attack and defence of the Chemin des Dames. General Joffre's memorandum to General French, dated 19th January, 1915, at a time when the British Commander believed that combined military and naval operations might be undertaken to remove the Germans from the Belgian coast, is also explanatory of the situation. It remarks that the French General Staff considered a German offensive probable in the near future. The French front must therefore be made absolutely secure. If broken, for example, about Roye and Montdidier, the consequences to the Allies would be of the most serious description. In addition, the Allies must place themselves in the position of being able to assume the offensive. They must, therefore, never lose sight of the decisive result and all secondary operations must give way. General Joffre added that operations towards Ostend-Zeebrugge, though important, were secondary to the principal need of the accumulation of reserves. "The German menace", he observed in a prophetic phrase, "is not a vain thing."

In the period under consideration the principal British operations took place between 14th and 19th December. They began with a combined French and British attack on the line Hollebeke-Wytschaete ridge. The French employed 5 regiments

of the 16th Corps on the British left flank, where the 2nd Battalion Royal Scots and 1st Battalion Gordons were operating; and the French 32nd Corps attacked to the north of the 16th Corps on the line Klein-Zillebeke-Hollebeke. It had been arranged that action should begin on this flank, the British coming in as progress was made. But progress was slow, the weather was dreadful, the ground a quagmire; and the British 2nd and 3rd Corps could do no more than mark time and demonstrate. The deadlock in this local operation remained for two days, and meanwhile an attack by the French (de Maud'huy) north of Arras (16th and 17th) gained some ground near Notre Dame de Lorette, but was not successful to any degree commensurate with the cost.

On the 18th General French proposed to mass the 16th French Corps and his 2nd British Corps for an attack on Wytschaete, but by this time de Maud'huy was beginning to call for reinforcements for his Arras attack, where the Germans had regained the ground they had lost at Notre Dame de Lorette. The French 16th Corps was obliged to supply them, while the British corps was asked to demonstrate in order to relieve pressure. On the 19th trenches were captured by the 3rd and 4th Corps. The Indian corps gained trenches and lost them again. On the 21st the Germans again attacked and took Givenchy, only to lose it once more. On the evening of the 21st the 1st Corps was ordered to take over the Indian corps line. Thus in a give-and-take struggle between forces approximately equal in numbers the line swayed to and fro, but except on the larger-scale maps the gains and losses were imperceptible. The failures were optimistically described as part of the wearing-down process. It is, at least, as likely that the causes of the failure were that the Germans were too strong, and that, as may be apprehended from the story of the engagements between 14th and 19th December at Wytschaete and at Arras, there was very far from being any real unity of command on the Allied front. Goodwill there was, but efficiency due to the smooth working of the military machine in its intricately dependent parts there was not.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGNS IN 1914

Russia's part in the war during 1914 divides itself disjointedly into two parts. The first was the Russian invasion of East Prussia, which, successful at first, collapsed under von Hindenburg's lethal thrust in the Masurian Lakes, and the battle named by the victors Tannenberg; and was followed by the soldiers' battle of Augustovo, in which part of the German advantage was lost. The second was the campaign in Galicia, and the first defeats of the Austro-Hungarian armies by General Ruzsky. This had been preceded by the Austrian invasion of Poland, and it was followed by the swift Russian advance, the fall of Lemberg, the investment of Przemysl, and the fighting which carried the Russians into the passes of the Carpathians.

The German Head-quarters Staff, which presumably knew more of the Russian capabilities of mobilization than any European War Office, appears to have underestimated the rate at which it could take place, and to have ruled out the likelihood of any invasion of German territory by Russian forces. It was presumed that before such an invasion could assume a dangerous aspect, the Germans would be able to release from their reserves, and from the Western Front, ample forces to deal with it. Russian generals, however, believed that their armies and organization would be able to exchange the traditional Russian defensive strategy for one of offence, and would be able to undertake a campaign against the most vulnerable portion of German territory in

East Prussia. Both views were shown by events to be based on unsound premises, but it was the course which events took that proved the expectations of either side to be wrong. The Russians knew that the Germans had underestimated the rapidity of their mobilization, and had posted inadequate forces in East Prussia. If, however, the Germans underestimated the Russian mobility, the Russians overestimated the value of their own early successes, and were tempted by them to place themselves in positions which the superior German staff work rendered untenable, and, being held too long, led to ruinous disaster.

It has been not unjustly assumed that the Russian dash into East Prussia was governed by the self-sacrificing desire of the Russians to lend the readiest possible support to France by diverting German forces from the west to the east; and it may be true that this desire was the balancing factor in sending the Russian forces forward at a time when a more cautious attitude would have been wiser and more productive. The success of the Galician campaign points to the certainty that a more defensive attitude in the north, coupled with a vigorous offensive where the Central Powers were weakest, namely, on the Austro-Hungarian front, would have averted the immediate disaster, and might have changed the whole course of the war. But war is made up of uncertainties in which a balance can seldom be struck correctly beforehand; and the policy of attacking East Prussia had much to recommend it. It was natural for Russian strategists to argue that, if an advance through Poland on Germany were contemplated, the northern flank must be cleared. That was, as should have been, the object of the invading armies; for, though history recorded Russian marches through this territory in other centuries, and though civilians and journalists spoke lightly of a march through East Prussia to Berlin, soldiers knew very well that the defensive lines of the Vistula, with the fortresses of Danzig, Graudenz and Thorn, would not be carried without great efforts and expenditure of men.

Nevertheless, if East Prussia could be taken it would be a perpetual menace to Germany, and a useful pawn in war or in the negotiations which follow war. Moreover, East Prussia, with Königsberg the cradle of the Prussian monarchy, had a sentimental value to Germany, and its recovery would be necessary to Prussian prestige. The routes by which an invasion of the province could be made were few. Three railways crossed the frontier. The first was the trunk road from Petrograd to Berlin, which crossed the Niemen at the fortress of Kovno, passed the frontier at Wirballen-Eydtkuhnen, and went on through Insterburg and Allenstein. Next to this was the branch line which left the main line at Bialystok, went past the small fortress of Osowiec, crossed the frontier at Grajevo, and at Lyck entered the Masurian Lake region on its way to Königsberg. The third line came up from Warsaw to Mlawa, thence through Eylau to Danzig. The obstacles to invasion were not fortresses, but lake and swamp and scarcity of roads. The Russian plan of campaign made provision for sending armies along the uppermost and lowest of these three routes. The northern, or Vilna army under General Rennenkampf, was concentrated behind the Niemen, and was based on Kovno and Grodno. The southern, or Warsaw army, under General Samsonoff, was concentrated behind the Narew. It detached an advance-guard to march into the Masurian Lakes in the direction of Lyck: but its main route was through Mlawa and Soldau.

Rennenkampf's army, which was to march direct east on Königsberg, comprised the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 12th Army Corps with the 3rd and 4th Reserve Divisions: and 5 cavalry divisions, including the Guard—a total strength of about a quarter of a million men. This army preceded its march with several minor successes, such as that at Eydtkuhnen on the frontier (6th August), and began its advance in force on 16th August. On the 17th Rennenkampf's vanguard came into touch with the German 1st (Königsberg) Army Corps at Stallupönen. The Germans fought a delaying action and drew off in good order towards Gumbinnen. In front of Gumbinnen was fought the first

considerable action of the Eastern campaign. The Russians were advancing on a front of about 35 miles from Pilkallen to Goldap and the railway bisected it; and they outnumbered the Germans by five to one. The fighting began on the right at Pilkallen, which was cleared without much difficulty: but Rennenkampf made no attempt to perform enveloping movements, preferring to crash, in the steam roller fashion with which Russian effort was so mistakenly associated, through the enemy's centre. On the 20th, after a brief artillery preparation, the Russian infantry carried the German positions at the point of the bayonet, but the fighting lasted all day, and the Königsberg corps (commanded by a German general of Huguenot descent, von François) fought bravely. One of the German cavalry divisions even retook Pilkallen, but could not hold it, and there was fighting at Goldap on the 21st, before the Germans under von François' command, withdrew, badly mauled, through Gumbinnen to Insterburg. They had fought a good delaying action, and von François was probably right in retiring from Insterburg without further attempt there to check the Russians. Rennenkampf reached Insterburg on the 23rd–24th: and thenceforward his advance was unopposed. His left (southern) wing pressed forward from Goldap to Angerburg on the edge of the Masurian lake country and thence followed a cross-country railway to Allenburg and reached a point on the Königsberg main line, and Tilsit. The northern portion of East Prussia was securely held as far as the River Alle, and the cavalry was pushed yet farther forward. Reports began to appear that Rennenkampf had invested the fortress of Königsberg, which was not the case, but the prospects of his army and its progress were sufficiently dazzling.

Samsonoff's army of about the same strength as that of Rennenkampf's, and consisting of 5 army corps and 3 cavalry divisions, had been meanwhile advancing with success from the line of the Narew. The country was much more difficult; and the advance was split into three lines. The easiest and most direct was along the Warsaw-Soldau railway. The second and third were towards Lyck, either through Osowiec or farther south, and thenceforward by detours to avoid the lakes. The German opposition was less determined than that encountered by Rennenkampf, and was, in the early stages, offered only by the Landwehr troops of middle-aged men. Only one corps of the active army, the 20th (Allenstein) Corps was in the field at this stage of the operations. Allenstein was taken by Samsonoff, and Frankenau after a stiff fight with the 20th Corps (23rd and 24th August). On the same day that Rennenkampf entered Insterburg, Samsonoff had broken the resistance of the weak forces opposed to him, and the Russians as an army had driven the Germans from all that part of East Prussia east and south of the main railway line. Rennenkampf's front faced south-west on the line Friedland-Gerdauen-Nardenburg-Angerburg. Samsonoff occupied the triangle Soldau-Allenstein-Frankenau. Their respective cavalry screens were seeking touch with one another. In a few days it seemed that the two invading armies would join hands, and half a million Russians would threaten the Vistula. The civilian inhabitants of East Prussia were streaming panic-stricken along the roads to Berlin.

Till this time the German Great General Staff, absorbed in the Western Operations, had been content to neglect the Eastern threat, and had disposed, all told, only 5 army corps, the Königsberg and Allenstein, as well as the 17th, 5th, and 6th, for emergencies on the Russian front. But after Gumbinnen new measures became imperative, and the first and most historical was to entrust the command of the forces to oppose the Russians to General Paul von Hindenburg, then a retired soldier of sixty-seven living at Hanover. Von Hindenburg had fought in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and had advanced to the rank of Corps Commander by conscientious regularity. In his long period of service with the Königsberg corps he had made a minute study of the topography of East Prussia which none knew better; his army manœuvres had for many years been practised over it, and he was a master of its tactical opportunities. Von Hindenburg was a man of character; he had

to aid him a man of equally strong personality, namely General von Ludendorff, who was appointed Chief of Staff in the East Prussian campaign. Ludendorff, who had led the assault at Liége, rose in fame side by side with von Hindenburg, and became in 1918 the actual Commander-in-Chief of the German armies.

The problem that confronted these two was that of beating the Russian armies with one German force barely equal in number to that commanded either by Rennenkampf or Samsonoff, and composed of second-line troops. The problem before them could be solved only by a superiority of mobility, which would enable them to attack the Russian armies separately. The possibility of attaining such mobility was conferred on them by the unequalled strategic railway system of Prussia, which assembled for Hindenburg and Ludendorff a force increased every hour by troop trains on the main line from Thorn to Osterode. These localities are mentioned because the German commanders decided to deal first with Samsonoff, whose forces, though encountering even less opposition than those of Rennenkampf, were situated on ground on which they would find it very difficult to deploy, and the peculiarities of which they must know less well than their opponents.

By laying under contribution the garrisons of Graudenz, Thorn, and Posen, and by bringing circuitously from Königsberg the corps commanded by von François, Hindenburg was able to bring up his forces on the spot to a total of some nine divisions. (The estimate is a Russian one and may be regarded as a maximum.) One may say, therefore, that Hindenburg had some 160,000 troops, some of them second-line, to put against Samsonoff's 200,000, exclusive of cavalry. But when the opposed forces were engaged Hindenburg had certainly a local superiority for he was able to bring his full weight to bear, while Samsonoff's forces were most unhappily distributed. The Russians had advanced with little prevision of the blow that might fall on them; their aviators were not numerous, their intelligence department was either wanting in intelligence or in loyalty. Their army was massed in the Soldau-Allenstein-Frankenau triangle, but they had not occupied the road leading from Osterode through Gilgenburg to Soldau, nor the two railways leading up to that junction of rail and road. Von Hindenburg's first step was to occupy Soldau junction and the road, and thus took the first trick by Wednesday, 26th. He had now a focal point from which he could reinforce, and a defensive position with marshes in front and a good road behind. Samsonoff was not blind to the disadvantage at which he had so swiftly been placed. With Soldau in enemy hands he might be cut off from the best line of retreat and of supply. He tried on the 27th to retake it, but the Germans were not likely to yield anything so valuable except to superior force, and that force Samsonoff could not localize, for in his triangle he was ill supplied with roads for concentration. He was driven yet farther back from this line of communication, and at Neidenburg his left became more cramped and his army nearer the marshes. Farther north, near Hohenstein, the Germans hammered another tightening wedge into the band encircling him. At Hohenstein the Russians tried to break through this first version of a Hindenburg line to the north-west. But once again it was the Germans who were handiest in bringing up reinforcements (from the Allenstein district which the Russians had abandoned), and after fighting on the 26th, 27th, 28th, the Russians were driven farther in in this area also.

The abandonment of Allenstein by the Russians was a blunder more irreparable than their neglect to secure Soldau. The loss of Soldau exposed their left to outflanking; but the abandonment of Allenstein gave to the Germans command of a still better line of railway, and a fine road. Thus, when Samsonoff was presumably awaiting another blow on his left wing, Hindenburg was massing by road and rail, and by every species of motor vehicle, a force to envelop the Russians on their right. Hindenburg's northern forces thus assembled swept round Samsonoff's right as far as Bischoffsburg. The Germans, coming still farther round, took Passenheim after a bloody struggle, and were now placed on three sides of the

Russians, with good roads on which they could bring up their guns. The guns completed what the infantry had begun. They had as targets masses of infantry which could neither deploy for attack nor manœuvre to avoid it. Their batteries, ignorant of the roads between the marshes towards which they were being driven, were lost. By the 30th whole battalions and regiments were surrendering; and the rest were streaming in disorganized retreat along the only road open to them by way of Ortelsburg and Johannisburg. On 31st August General Samsonoff, who had borne himself with great personal bravery, was killed by a shell which burst amid his staff. The Germans took 90,000 prisoners; the killed and wounded numbered another 30,000. Except for 1 army corps, which escaped through Ortelsburg intact, and about half another, which straggled after it, and cavalry or infantry which escaped in flying fragments, the army of the Narew had ceased to exist.

Great as the victory was—the greatest victorious engagement of the war till 1918—the Germans strove without pause to convert it into a greater one by cutting off Rennenkampf. Hindenburg advanced as quickly as possible from the southern area to strike at the Russian northern army's communications. He marched towards Nordenburg, Angerburg, and Goldap with Gumbinnen and Eydtkuhnen as his goals. But Rennenkampf, whose flourishing demonstration had not disturbed the Germans in their task of destroying his colleague, was at any rate prudent enough to withdraw when he scented danger. He served his country best by a rapid retreat, and fell back quickly on the Niemen and his bases. The retreat cost him some 30,000 men and 150 guns captured in rear-guard actions. On 11th September Rennenkampf's army evacuated Insterburg, and on the 15th no Russians were left in East Prussia except as prisoners, and the Germans had crossed the frontier. Hindenburg's further successes comprised the defeat of two new Russian army corps (one Siberian and one Finnish) at Lyck, though the Russians fought well, and another success in the first engagement at Augustovo. Suvalki, the administrative centre of the Russian frontier province, was occupied on 15th September: and Hindenburg sent General von Morgen forward towards the Niemen. Here, however, the German successes ended. The northern Russian army recrossed the river on the 23rd, and General Ruzsky, a far more capable leader than those whom Hindenburg had defeated and put to flight, was sent up from Galicia to reorganize the defence.

General Ruzsky had not a superhuman task in repairing the disasters that had overtaken the Russians in their first attempt at invasion. Rennenkampf had brought back his army corps intact, save for losses which could be repaired quickly from the depots; and though the first stupendous blunder of Russian generalship was probably the origin of that distrust which gradually sapped the enthusiasm of the Russian soldier for the war, yet for a time at all events the army as a whole seemed unperturbed by its calamities. The Germans, who may have hoped for a yet greater extension of their victory if they could cross the Niemen and cut the Petrograd-Vilna-Warsaw railway, soon found that their 4 army corps, helped though it was by superior artillery, was quite insufficient to exploit the situation. On the Russian side of the frontier was no network of strategic railways; few of the Russian roads would bear heavy motor transport, and it was as difficult to deploy German armies among the Russian swamps as it had been to manœuvre Russian armies among the Masurian Lakes. The early autumn rains made the task of the invading Germans more difficult.

By 23rd September, when Rennenkampf's rear-guard crossed the Niemen, the Germans occupied all the chief strategic points between the river and their own frontier, including Augustovo, a place which derives its importance from its position as a road junction. A railway runs from the fortress of Grodno on the Niemen to Augustovo, and thence through Suvalki back to the Niemen at fortified Olita. Neither side could use it in its damaged condition. The chief physical feature of the region is the deep Russian forest, on the western edge of which Augustovo stands. Intricate chains of lakes

RUSSIA'S ENTRY INTO THE WAR

Citizens of Petrograd offering up prayers for the victory of Russia's arms

stud the country between Suvalki and the Niemen, which differs only in the size of its lakes, and not in their number, from the Masurian country on the other side of the border. The Russian defences rested, however, not on these, except in so far as they were natural defences, but on the River Niemen and the River Bobr, which runs away south-westwards from Lipsk through Osowiec, almost at right angles to the Niemen. The Niemen is a formidable obstacle, 200 yards wide; the Bobr is a comparatively insignificant stream, but deep enough to drown man and horse, and it runs through a swampy valley of impassable marshes. There is only one good passage, a paved road which crosses the river at Osowiec. Osowiec was only a third class fortress with forts that might have been supposed to be very vulnerable to the siege guns which the Germans had at command. Nevertheless it distinguished itself notably in the German operations against the Niemen-Bobr defences by resisting all the efforts in the last week of September, 1914, to capture it. Its immunity was in part due to the impossibility of surrounding it, because of its protective moats of marshes, and the impracticability of capturing it by direct assault along the narrow causeway which led to it.

The failure at Osowiec was overshadowed by the greater failure of the whole German operations against the Niemen line. The attempt to cross the river was made at two points, at Drusenkini, some 30 miles north of Grodno, and a point farther south, where the River Dubissa falls into the Niemen. At Drusenski the Germans endeavoured to cross by pontoons, and three most costly attempts failed on 25th September. Cossacks crossed the river from east to west at nightfall and drove the Germans back 8 miles. At the Dubissa crossing the Germans could not succeed in approaching the river, which was protected by entrenched Russian infantrymen on the western bank. The Russian heavy guns were posted on the opposite bank. The fighting lasted till the morning, when the Germans retreated. The double operation entirely failed: the Germans had to withdraw, harassed by Russian cavalry, whenever these could find an opening. The Russians fought the Germans through the forest, hand to hand: but the decisive action was fought in the clear space about Augustovo. The Germans had laid out their position with customary skill so as to command the exit from the forest with cross fire. The Russians crossed the Niemen-Augustovo-Bobr canal, which runs in two branches at right angles, with Augustovo at the angle, executed a wide turning movement, and got their heavy guns to bear on Augustovo from west and north-west. They took the town on 1st October, and the infantry pressed on with a furious zeal, clearing the few roads of the obstacles the Germans had left as they went.

The Germans recognized that they were beaten, and that they must cut their losses as best they might. They called their troops off Osowiec, which celebrated the raising of the siege with a useful sortie, and on 3rd and 4th October they fell back as fast as they could towards their own frontier. Augustovo was a soldiers' battle, of which the heroes were the Russian and Siberian infantrymen, some of whom marched thirty miles in a day (3rd Siberians) and finished with a bayonet charge. But the operations were well planned; they restored confidence to the Russian army after its tremendous disaster; they rehabilitated Russian generalship—though Ruzsky's reputation was already well founded—and they proved to Germany that the Russian danger was one that must be dealt with. For the rest of the winter operations here were at a standstill.

General Ruzsky had been sent up from the southern area of the Russian operations, where a success was won which threw into darker relief the failures of Samsonoff and Rennenkampf. The Austro-Hungarian armies had reversed the experiences of the German forces, and after a march into Russian territory, which was not dissimilar from that which the Russians had conducted in East Prussia, had been as ignominously bundled out again. As a substitute for action which Germany could not at the opening of the war undertake on the Eastern Front, the Austro-Hungarian armies had been urged to advance by the German Headquarters Staff, and once again a miscalcula-

tion was made as to the rapidity of Russian mobilization and the fighting weight of the Russian armies. There was excuse for the German belief that a thrust by Austria-Hungary would gravely discommode Russia, and should pave the way for ultimate combined German and Austro-Hungarian action against her, because, whereas the Russian railway communications on the Poland side were few, there were two main lines of railway on the Austrian side running parallel to the frontier, and fed with strategic railways like the ribs of a herring bone on either side. On the Russian side the main line from Warsaw through Lublin to Kieff was on an average 50 miles from the frontier, with only two spurs towards enemy territory, one from Kovel towards, but not reaching, Vladimir-Volynsk, and another from Rovno to Lemberg, cutting the frontier at Brody. The main line crossed the frontier at Tarnopol.

The operations undertaken by the Austro-Hungarian command were designed not to put the southern Russian armies out of action but to detain them and prevent their collaboration with the armies of the north. There were 3 armies at command. The chief offensive was undertaken by the First Austrian Army under General Dankl, consisting of 7 army corps, approximately 350,000 men. From its base on Przemysl and Jaroslav it was to push upwards in the country between the Vistula and the Bug to Lublin and Kholm, there to cut and hold the main line from Warsaw to Kieff, and to threaten the communications behind Warsaw. While the First Army was thus advancing it would have as protection from the east the Second Army under General von Auffenberg, which would push north-east from Lemberg, and hold Eastern Galicia. Von Auffenberg had 5 army corps, subsequently increased to 6, and 5 cavalry divisions. There was a Third (Reserve) Army under the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, which took little part in the operations, except as a feeder to the others, but protected Dankl's western flank. The three armies combined numbered about a million men. Germany had 3 army corps at Posen and Breslau; these would have facilitated the task of the Third Austrian Army in an advance behind Warsaw if Dankl's First Army had been successful.

The Grand-Duke Nicholas and the Russian General Staff were aware of the Austrian intentions, and went steadily on with their own mobilization till they had a superiority in numbers as well as in fighting and marching capacity. No serious opposition was offered to the advance of Dankl's First Army, which had an easy and unresisted march to within ten miles of Lublin. The Third Austrian Army pursued as uneventful a march towards Kielce. Brushes with frontier posts and scouts confirmed the impression that Russia was unready; the advance resembled a joy-march. On the line, however, from Lublin to Kholm, with a good railway behind them, the Russians steadily massed an army of 400,000, commanded by General Ivanoff, with Generals Evert and Plehve as his subordinates. By the first days of September this army was in a position to check the further advance of Dankl.

Meanwhile von Auffenberg's Second Army, which was intended not as a spear-head but as a flanking shield, had found that the Russians did not accept this version of the action intended for it. As early as 11th August reports from Vienna spoke of Russian cavalry demonstrations at Brody, on the Second Army's right, and two days later came news of more violent cavalry actions. On the 17th Petrograd announced that the general advance of the Russian armies against the Austrian had begun. Against von Auffenberg the advance was in most capable hands. The chief command was held by General Ruzsky, who had a knowledge of this part of Galicia and south-east Russia comparable with that of Hindenburg in East Prussia. On his left he had General Brussiloff, and these two commanders had with them some fourteen army corps, or about 700,000 men. Ruzsky's army (Second) had the larger share, Brussiloff (Third) had some 300,000 men, including the pride of the cavalry. They outnumbered von Auffenberg's, who hastily called on the Archduke's army for reinforcements.

At the moment when Dankl, with the First Austrian Army, was being held up, General

Ruzsky threw the whole of his forces in an enveloping attack on von Auffenberg. With the Second Army he advanced along the railway from Dubno and occupied Brody on 23rd August. On the 22nd Brussiloff on Ruzsky's left crossed the frontier at Woloczysk, on the lower railway line from Lemberg and Tarnopol to Odessa. A road runs alongside this railway, and Brussiloff's cavalry on the 23rd occupied Tarnopol, driving the Austrians before them. Little resistance was offered, and Brussiloff's army advanced to the River Zlota Lipa before engaging strong forces of the enemy. There was heavy fighting here on 25th and 26th August before the Austrians were pushed back to the next line of defence, the River Gnila Lipa, which falls into the Dniester at Halicz. While Brussiloff was thus pressing back Auffenberg's southern wing, Ruzsky's army, spreading out on a wide front, was fighting its way forward against his centre and was pushing a wedge between his northern wing and Dankl's First Army. The Austrians were thus pushed steadily back, and, though they fought well, were given no pause for a week of fighting, while Ruzsky and Brussiloff were continually spreading out so as to come into touch with one another. The Russians made contact on 26–27th August, and immediately opened a fresh attack along the whole front against the outer defensive lines of Lemberg, on which the Austrians had fallen back.

Fighting of the most severe kind went on for two days, the Austro-Hungarian forces resisting desperately, and organizing continual counter-attacks, so that though trenches were taken and retaken, and then lost again, this front was not pierced. But they were pinned to their positions, and the Russians were numerically strong enough to keep them there while putting into action a turning movement to the south. General Brussiloff, after making contact with General Ruzsky on the 26th, sent General Radko Dimitrieff to swing wide to the south in the valley of the Dniester. On 30th August the flanking force, having travelled over very rough country, with no railways and the worst of roads, arrived before Halicz, and after a short night's rest began the assault. They had not many guns, but more came up on 31st August, and an attack of great fury was concentrated on the Austrian position. The final assault of two Russian regiments (9th and 57th) pierced the Austrian line and the Russians poured through, followed by their guns. Once the breach was made the Austrian resistance collapsed: their troops lost temporarily all fighting value. Some 5000 Austrians were killed, and 32 guns captured. The Austrians had just time to blow up the steel bridge at Halicz, though they cut off the retreat of many of their own men in doing so, and the only other bridge, at Chorodov, was also destroyed, so that the pursuit was checked while pontoon bridges were thrown across. But these were constructed next day, and three divisions of Cossack cavalry got over and caught up the retreat of what was now an entirely unorganized army. The Russian infantry tirelessly followed, and pushed on south of Lemberg towards Stryj.

The right, or southern half of the Austrian army was shattered. At the other, the northern extremity, Ruzsky had been able to continue his outflanking thrust towards Kamionka, 20 miles north-east of Lemberg, and thus, by bending back the Austrian line, to shorten its central front, which was pitilessly hammered. The Lemberg defences could no longer be held. Von Auffenberg's army crumbled and fled westwards beyond Lemberg, its retreat harassed by Russian cavalry, and rendered more difficult by the early autumn rain-storms. The Russians had attacked reckless of losses: but they now took interest for them. Lemberg fell, and Auffenberg's army was captured by the ten thousand. Many of the prisoners were Slavs, only too glad of the opportunity to surrender. The number of the prisoners were estimated at 65,000: the Austro-Hungarian losses in all could not have fallen short of double that number.

Dankl, with his First Army, had remained as helpless and inept a spectator of the disasters overtaking his colleague as had Rennenkampf in a similar but reversed position. He could neither advance north, nor turn east and south to aid von Auffenberg, to whom reinforcements had been sent out, not

from Dankl, but from the reserve army under the Archduke Josef Ferdinand. The Archduke's army, under the stress of the events of the last days of August, had been reconstituted, reinforced by forces drawn from the South Serbian front and stiffened with some German troops. It was now officially called the Austrian Fourth Army. The Russian official reports referred to it as the "Tomaszow Army". The name was probably conferred on it because it was towards Tomaszow that General Ruzsky was driving the wedge that was to separate Dankl's First Army from von Auffenberg's defeated troops. This wedge reached its objective point during the first week in September, after a good deal of confused fighting, and the Tomaszow army then fell back towards Tarnograd and the swampy country north of it.

Meanwhile it had become evident to General Dankl that he must either break through the northern barrier opposed to him by General Ivanoff, or retreat before becoming cut off from his bases by the advance of Ruzsky's army. He made an attempt to cut a way forward on 2nd September in the direction of Lublin, but the advance could not be maintained, and the attack having spent itself he was compelled to withdraw, leaving 5000 prisoners behind. The Russians in their turn attacked Dankl on 4th September, and had an immediate success against his centre at Krasnostaw, which is a village south-west of Kholm, and General Dankl perceived that his prospects of success were infinitesimal, and that retreat might no longer be open to him if he delayed. The retreat to the line of the San began at once: and again one might find a parallel in it to the retreat of Rennenkampf. The distinction was that Dankl's withdrawal of an army of 300,000 men on an 80-mile front, its left wing hemmed in by the Vistula, its right never able to escape from the oncoming Russian forces, was a very creditable achievement. Any mistakes and his army would have shared the fate of von Auffenberg's in an amplified degree. His retreat was not made without severe losses. The first blow struck at him had been at Krasnostow in the centre: the second was at Opolie on his left, spreading to Turobin, all the Russian reinforcements being thrown on to this wing. The Austrians were driven southward parallel to the Vistula, and then, as they retreated, the Russian cavalry got in among them. At Suchodola, at Krasnik, and at Frampol there were fierce rear-guard engagements before the Austrian left was crowded back to join the remnants of von Auffenberg's army in the swamps between Tarnopol and Bielgoroj. The Austro-Hungarian armies were then falling back on the line of the San, which runs from Przemysl through Jaroslav to the Vistula. There was an advance line of defences through Rawa Ruska to Grodek, a fortress 30 miles east of Przemysl. These defences were manned with the reinforced forces of von Auffenberg's army along a line of 60 miles: and at Grodek the country was such that the line could not well be turned.

The attack began here, but the force of it was cumulative farther north, and the Austrian line became bent back in an angle on either side of Rawa-Ruska. The defences at this small Galician town were hardly more than 8 miles in frontal length, and on this space the whole fury of the Russian attack converged. The assault went on with scarcely breathing space for more than a week: and nowhere was fighting more to the credit of the Austro-Hungarian infantry, who were driven back only foot by foot. The battle of Rawa-Ruska was one of the bloodiest of the campaign in either East or West; and the difficulties of the position which the Russians at length took may be gathered from the fact that one point in them was protected by a series of six connecting lakes with marshy ground cut up by dykes! It was not till 14th September that the Russians could claim a victory for the army of General Brussiloff, after a display of "the highest energy, staunchness, and gallantry" on the part of his troops. On the following day the announcement was made that Grodek had been occupied and Brussiloff's centre had reached Moeziska, within a day's march of Przemysl. Ruzsky meanwhile was sweeping the rear-guards of Dankl in front of him, and took Jaroslav by assault on 24th September. Thus Przemysl was cut off, east, north, and south, and the remnants of von Auffenberg's army took refuge inside its defences.

EAST-EUROPEAN THEATRE OF WAR
English Miles
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140
Fortified Towns
BALTIC SEA
Copenhagen to Danzig 265 m. to Kendsk 290 m.
Gulf of Danzig
GERMANY
RUSSIA
AUSTRIA HUNGARY
POLAND
Libau
Memel
Tilsit
KÖNIGSBERG
DANZIG
Kowno
WILNA
Grodno
Bialistock
Lomza
Mlava
Allenstein
Marienburg
Graudenz
Thorn
Bromberg
POSEN
Alexandrowo
WARSAW
Novo Georgievsk
Brest Litewski
Pinsk
Sedletz
Kalisz
Lodz
Petrikau
Radomi
Ivangorod
Lublin
Kelze
Cracow
Tarnow
Jaroslau
Przemysl
Lemberg
Stanislau
Kolomea
Czernowitz
Hliboka
Radziwillow
Brody
Dubno
Rowno
Luzk
Kholm
Siedlce
Pultusk
Ostrolenka
Lapy
Sokolka
Augustovo
Kalvarya
Olita
Subalki
Wilkowyszki
Wirballen
Eydtkuhnen
Insterburg
Tapiau
Pillau
Elbing
Dirschau
Neustettin
Stolp
Stolpmünde
Rügenwalde
Zoppot
Neufahrw.
Kahlberg
Putzig
Lauenburg
Breslau
Oppeln
Neisse
Glatz
Ratibor
Beuthen
Gleiwitz
Kattowitz
Sosnowice
Dombrowa
Granica
Szczakowa
Myslowitz
Kreuzburg
Namslau
Militsch
Kempen
Wilhelmsbrück
Tremessen
Gnesen
Schrimm
Schroda
Jarotschin
Kanker
Lissa
Rawitsch
Ostrowo
Skalmierzyce
Sieradz
Tomaschew
Petrikau
Koluski
Skierniewice
Gora
Garvolin
Biala
Lukow
Vegrow
Sokolov
Jabinka
Kobrin
Luninez
Malkin
Ostrow
Bjelsk
Gainovka
Pultusk
Novo Minsk
Vlodava
Kovel
Sarni
Maloryto
Pripet
Bug
Narew
Vistula
Warta
Netze
Brahe
Drage
Tarnowitz
Zyrardow
Skarshisko
Ostrowez
Krasnystav
Bilgoray
Hrubeszov
Sokal
Tomaszov
Nadrzecze
Rozwadow
Sobow
Belzec
Rawa Ruska
Przewopsk
Lubaczow
Dembica
Rzeszow
Jaslo
Dynow
Sanok
Sambor
Chyrow
Drohobycz
Boryslaw
Stryi
Halicz
Dolina
Skole
Nadworna
Kolomea
Sniatyn
Kuty
Czortkow
Husiatyn
Skala
Podwolczyska
Tarnopol
Chadorow
Zloczow
Lemberg
Sadowa
Krasne
Kremenets
Ostrog
Dubno
Rowno
Sdolbunow
Kiwerzy
Vladimir Volynskii
Kowel
Stepan
Sarni
Pripet
Horyn
Styr
Luninez
Pinsk
Brest Litewski
Kobrin
Jabinka
Tewli
Wolkowsk
Slonim
Baranowitschi
Novogrudok
Stolbzy
Lida
Oshmiana
Wilejskaja
Landwarowo
Swentsiany
Vilkomir
Keidani
Rossieny
Tauroggen
Heydekrug
Nidden
Schwarzort
Polangen
Bajohren
Libau
Hasenpoth
Goldingen
Tukum
Schlok
Riga
Mühlgraben
Hafendamm
Mitau
Romershof
Kreuzburg
Jacobstadt
Bauske
Autz
Moschaiki
Teishi
Schaul
Ponemunok
Kalkuhnen
Owinsk
Kreslawka
Novo Alexandrovsk
Ponewesh
Radziwilischki
Kowno
Koschedari
Ragnit
Szillen
Pillkallen
Gumbinnen
Stallupönen
Pilkallen
Lasdehnen
Grunheide
Skaisgiren
Tilsit
Labiau
Kurisches Haff
Cranz
Warnicken
Palmnicken
Rixhöft
Loba
Putzig
Neustadt
Lauenburg
Stolp
Zollbrück
Carthaus
Bütow
Lauenburg
Rügenwalde
Schlawe
Zoppot
Neufahrw.
Kahlberg
Pillau
Tapiau
Eydtkuhnen
Wirballen
Kalvarya
Olita
Patarani
Orani
Salessje
Subalki
Augustovo
Lyck
Widminnen
Rothfliess
Rastenburg
Korschen
Barten
Bartenstein
Gerdauen
Goldap
Darkehmen
Kl. Guja
Insterburg
Stallupönen
Gumbinnen
Wehlau
Zinten
Kobbelbude
Neuhausen
Königsberg
Tapiau
Pillau
Elbing
Dirschau
Mohrungen
Soldau
Neidenburg
Strasburg
Gruppenhagen
Gottenbrode
Osterode
Allenstein
Deutsch Eylau
Lobau
Hohenstein
Tannenberg
Ortelsburg
Johannisburg
Lyck
Prostken
Grajewo
Goniond
Sokolka
Mosti
Grodno
Novogrudok
Stolbzy
Slonim
Baranowitschi
Wolkowsk
Bialistock
Lomza
Ostrolenka
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Gumbinnen
Wehlau
Zinten
Kobbelbude
Neuhausen
Königsberg
Tapiau
Pillau
Elbing
Dirschau
Mohrungen

Meanwhile General Dankl, though losing men and guns in the Opolie-Turobin district, had reached the San, to which he had prudently turned back his transport in advance of his retirement. Some of the transport had reached there as early as 9th September, the bulk of the army got there on 12th September. While the main body and the baggage were getting across, the strong rear-guards to north and east were left to hold back the Russians. One rear-guard rested its left on the Vistula, the other rear-guard had its right on the San; and the ground was marshy in front of the arc they made. But the Russians, flushed with victory, were not to be denied, and they broke through the arc long before the crossing of the San was accomplished, and followed the retreating troops across the bridges. One bridge they captured intact and held at Rzeszov, a few miles west of Tarnogrod. The crossing of the San gave Dankl's First Army a position of comparative safety, but it was effected at a very heavy cost, including 30,000 prisoners, in addition to those killed and drowned in the action. On the other side of the Vistula a Russian force had worked its way up the river and threw a considerable number of troops across at Josefow where they joined other men of Ivanoff's armies on the eastern bank. They met and defeated a body of mixed German and Austrian troops at Sandomierz, while their comrades were forcing the crossing of the San.

The Russians were now masters of all Eastern Galicia. They had captured Stryj, Stanislau, Halicz, Lemberg, Jaroslav, Brody, Lutz, Grodek, Tarnopol, Brezany, and all the railway systems which led the way to the Carpathians. Przemysl held out, but could scarcely be relieved in face of the losses which the Austro-Hungarian armies had suffered—losses estimated at some 400,000 men, prisoners, wounded, and killed —as well as in guns. It was the flood tide, though not the high-water mark of Russian success.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BRITISH CAMPAIGN IN THE WEST IN 1915

The opening months of 1915 on the British front in the west were marked by few engagements. The winter, cold and very wet, converted the difficult positions of the Ypres salient into a muddy purgatory —and endurance was made the harder because of the shortage of shells and of heavy artillery with which to respond to the German bombardments. Nevertheless, the British Expeditionary Force was growing, and an army of traditions and discipline, modelled on those of the old one, was being developed in the school of the most trying warfare that any volunteer army ever had to endure. The earliest complete corps to arrive was the newly-formed 5th, under the command of General Sir Herbert Plumer, and consisted of the 27th and 28th Divisions, composed chiefly of British troops from India and Territorial battalions. At the beginning of February this corps relieved the French troops (General d'Urbal), who had taken over trenches at Ypres at the end of November, 1914. The other dispositions at this period were, south of Ypres, 2nd Corps, 3rd Corps, 4th Corps (north of Neuve Chapelle), Indian Corps, and the 1st Corps (opposite La Bassée).

Prior to the arrival of the 5th Corps there had been two fierce little engagements, one, on 25th January, in the neighbourhood of La Bassée, where the British and French lines joined, and another over the old ground at Givenchy. At Givenchy the attack was beaten off, at La Bassée our front line trenches were lost, but the second ones held, and after a futile attempt by the Germans to improve the position (29th January) the lost ground was recovered by the Irish and Coldstream Guards (1st February). The

occasion was distinguished by the award of the first V.C. of 1915 to Michael O'Leary, a name that remained for a long time an oriflamme of war in the recruiting campaign. These actions at Cuinchy and Givenchy seem relatively unimportant when the five years' war is considered as a whole, but, like many another, greater and smaller, in the grinding war of trenches, they had their share in moulding the British armies into the fighting machine they became. The force at this time marked its increasing size by coalescing into two armies: the First under Sir Douglas Haig, comprising the 1st, 4th, and Indian Corps; the Second Army, under Sir H. Smith-Dorrien, with the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Corps. The new formations as they came out were either fitted into these or formed part of a Third Army. Each army consisted at this time of some 120,000 men.

There were other minor engagements in February,[1] in which the new 5th Corps, which had experienced trying times after its arrival, began to find its feet, and towards March the weather cleared. On March 10th General French broke the period of trench warfare with an attack at Neuve Chapelle. The heavy artillery had been greatly augmented. Sir John French could command a concentration of 300 guns, which at that time seemed unprecedentedly formidable; and he planned an attack which, if successful, would burst through the German line sufficiently far to give the attackers the Aubers Ridge, on the other side of which lay the desired plain of Tourcoing and Lille. Surprise and a heavy bombardment were the elements of this plan. Sir H. Smith-Dorrien was to demonstrate on the whole front of the Second Army, while the First Army was to narrow down its attack to the Neuve Chapelle sector while making a secondary attack with its own 1st Corps to the south of the point most heavily assailed. Thus it was hoped German reinforcements would be unable to get up, and the wedge would be driven through at the point where they were weakest.

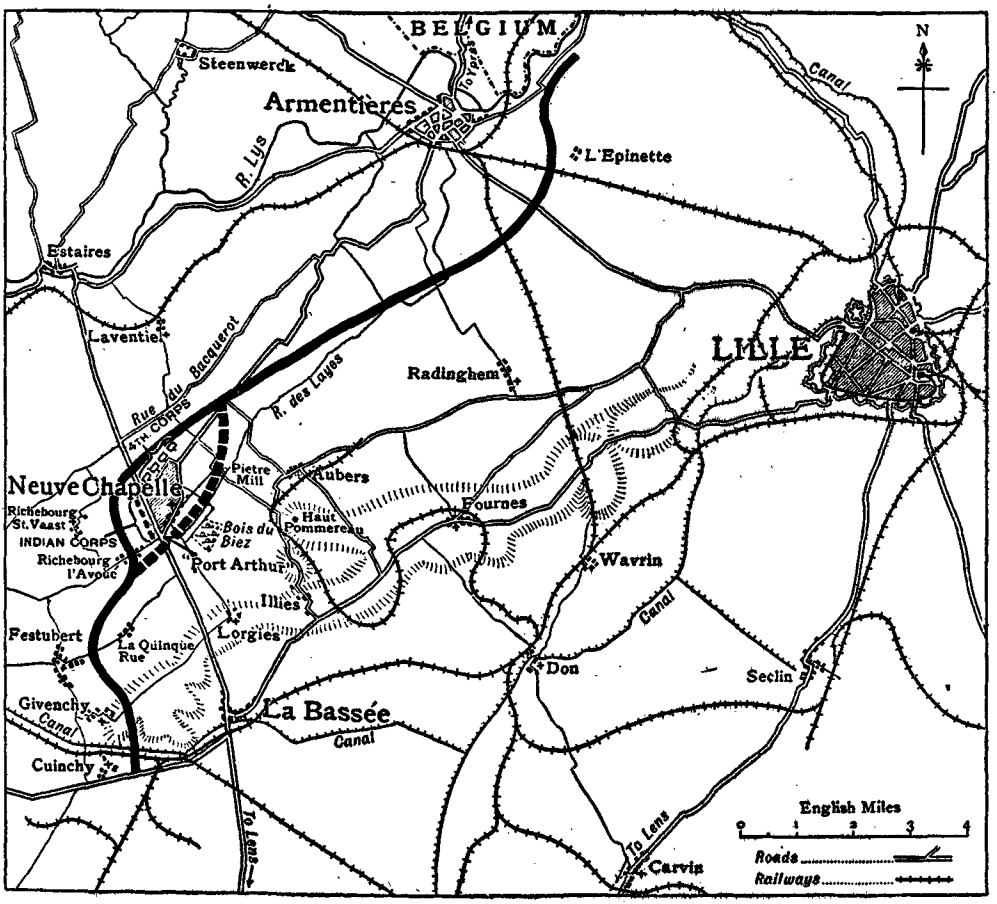
Neuve Chapelle (10th March) proved a costly and unsuccessful experiment. At the time its failure appeared to be due to causes which were accidental, or should have been removed by greater foresight. It is probable, nevertheless, that it was foredoomed to failure for the fundamental reason that the attack was not undertaken on a sufficiently wide front, or with sufficient weight of men, or with that superiority of artillery which, coupled with surprise, could alone ensure anything approaching a productive break-through. The preliminaries were excellent. The British airmen duly bombarded Menin, Courtrai, and Douai, the railway junctions through which German reinforcements to the sector attacked could be brought up; the 300 guns loosed a devastating bombardment, lasting thirty-five minutes, on the barbed-wire entanglements and machine-gunned German trenches, and the troops sent forward were able to walk over part of the ground bombarded without serious opposition. But only over part of it.

The troops chosen for the assault were Rawlinson's 4th Army Corps on the left, and the Indian Corps upon the right, on a front of half a mile, which, as the action developed, broadened to a mile and a half. The assault was undertaken, left to right, by the 23rd Infantry Brigade (Pinney) and 25th Infantry Brigade (Lowry-Cole), both of the 8th Division and the Indian Corps. With the 25th Brigade the attack prospered. The 23rd Brigade was held up by a broad sheet of wire partially demolished, and the losses of the 2nd Scottish Rifles and 2nd Middlesex were very heavy in consequence. It was only at great cost, and after considerable delay, that the remains of the 23rd Brigade were able to get into alignment with the advance of the 25th Division. The 24th Brigade came up in support, and the 1000 yards progress was made good. The Indians on the right—Garwhali Brigade, Gurkhas, Dehra Duns, and other troops of the Meerut Division—supported by the Leicesters and London Territorials, were held up for a time, but forced a way forward and, supported by the 25th Brigade, took Neuve Chapelle by midday. At half-past three the attack was renewed, having been extended to the west by the 21st Brigade of the 7th Division.

[1] The British losses during the winter, despite the desultory character of the warfare, amounted to 20,000.

In this sector the objective was a small village, Moulin-du-Pietre. Here again the attack was held up, and so was the renewed attack on the immediate right of it, where the 24th Brigade had taken the place of the badly mauled 23rd. So also was the renewed attack of the Indians on the Bois-du-Biez,

The expectations of the next day (11th) were early clouded by the presence of a thick mist which made accurate artillery fire impossible, and enabled the Germans to bring up reinforcements easily. Very much later in the war the Germans utilized mist by ruthlessly sending masses of men up




The Battle-ground of Neuve Chapelle: map showing the British positions on the eve of the attack, and the British line before and after the fighting of 10th–14th March, 1915

south-east of Neuve Chapelle. The end of the day came with the British and the Indians holding what they had won, but with a doubtful prospect of improving on it. The demonstrations in support of this main attack had been limited to gun-fire along Smith-Dorrien's front, but had comprised an infantry attack at Givenchy by the 1st Corps on the south. This attack was carried out by the 6th Brigade (Fanshawe) and cost over 600 casualties.

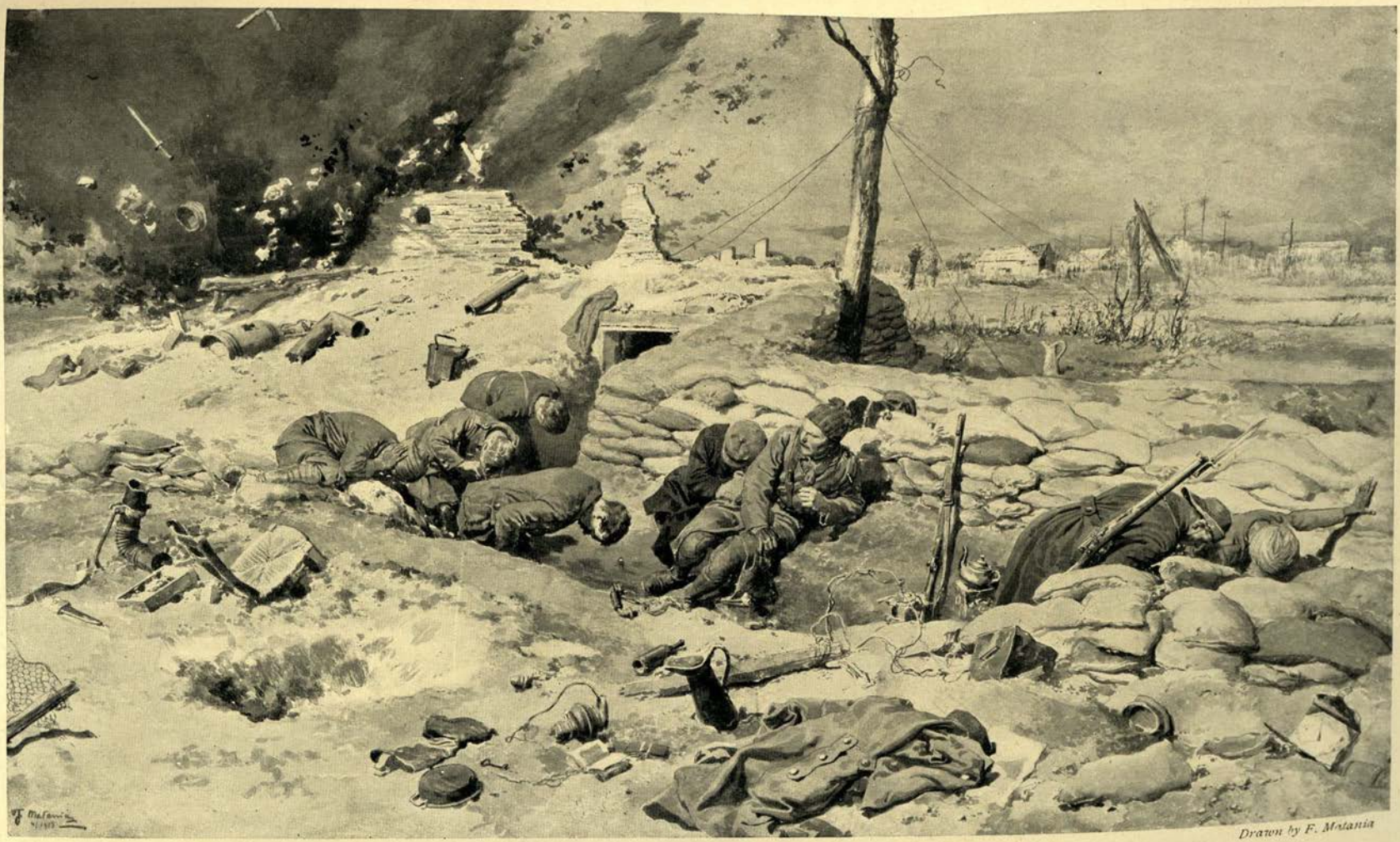
through it; but the use of massed attacks was always contrary to British practice and theory, and it would have been impossible, in view of the numbers at Sir John French's disposal, to employ such means in 1915. With no weapon, therefore, to force a way through, the line remained held up in front of Moulin-du-Pietre in the north, and the Bois-du-Biez in the south, losing heavily all the time from the German artillery, which

of course had the ranges marked. On the 12th the morning again broke misty, but as the day cleared a determined attack was made on the fortified parts in the village and on the wood. At Moulin-du-Pietre the 20th Brigade was sent up and the 2nd Borderers, 2nd Scots Guards, 1st Grenadiers, 2nd Gordons, and 6th Gordons, got into the outskirts of the village and captured prisoners. But their losses were heavy, as were those of the 25th Brigade on their right. The Germans now turned to counter-attack in mass; and at last the heavy toll of killed and wounded began to fall on them instead of on the assaulting British. But the enemy's ability to counter-attack, however costly the the preliminary steps of such a offensive might be, was in itself evidence that the battle of Neuve Chapelle had exhausted its possibilities. It was broken off, and the Germans acquiesced in leaving the attackers in possession of the ground won. This amounted to about 1000 yards on a front of less than two miles.

The ground, together with prisoners numbering 30 officers and 1650 men, had been purchased at a cost of 562 officers and 12,239 men, of whom some 1800 were returned as "missing". The German losses were estimated as rather greater than this, but there is no denying that some of our best brigades suffered very severely in a task that was not specially productive. A small action fought by the 1st Wilts and 2nd Worcesters, near Wytschaete, on the last day of the battle, was delayed by the mist, and added to the total of losses without achieving any result of material value.

Two days afterwards (14th March) the Germans attacked Smith-Dorrien's front at St. Eloi in a surprise action, which followed the explosion of a mine under a long-disputed post south-east of the village. This attack was an exploitation of a new method of attack, and was in that respect experimental: first a bombardment, then the mine explosion, followed by a bombing attack by infantry, and completed by a detachment of sappers and machine-gunners to acquire the won and shattered ground. The whole thing was a model—and a lesson—even to the way in which the bombardment beyond the British lines cut telephone wires and hampered the preparations for counter-attack. The 82nd Brigade (27th Division) formed the chopping-block, and the 2nd Cornwalls and 2nd Irish Fusiliers the chief sufferers. The counter-attack, delayed till 2 o'clock next morning, and conducted largely by Irish troops, recovered part of the ground lost, but not all. Thenceforward, for a month, the daily attrition of trench warfare was resumed. The Germans, inspired by the ideas of their "Easterners", were standing on the defensive in the West, while maturing plans to break the Russian front, and, in general, reacted only when action was forced on them by French or British assaults. This defensive attitude did not preclude German offensive action; but it was never undertaken on the greater scale which, according to German strategic teaching, was the only scale on which it could be conducted with profit. Even the great poison gas-attack, which was the outstanding feature of the opening of the second Battle of Ypres in April, was rather an experimental gambit—afterwards developed to the full—than a characteristic German assault in force.

It was preceded by a long-drawn-out struggle on the smaller scale for the possession of Hill 60, a low ridge about a furlong in length in the Zillebeke region. The ridge was valuable as an observation post, of which the British possessed too few and the Germans many, for both then, and for two years to come, the British lines, overlooked by the enemy, suffered increasingly from a galling fire. Both sides were now engaged in mining, an operation to which subsequently the British called in the aid of competent geologists, and Hill 60 was mined by Monmouthshire men. In the evening of 17th April the mines were fired, and the hill was immediately and successfully stormed by Royal West Kents and 2nd Scottish Borderers. Sappers raced up on the heels of the infantry, and in six hours the troops had been dug in. German counter-attacks, preceded and supported by bombers, were sent forward throughout the night, and at half-past five next morning reinforcements (2nd West Ridings and 1st Bedfords, and subse-



*Drawn by F. Matania*

THE BATTLE-FIELD OF NEUVE CHAPELLE

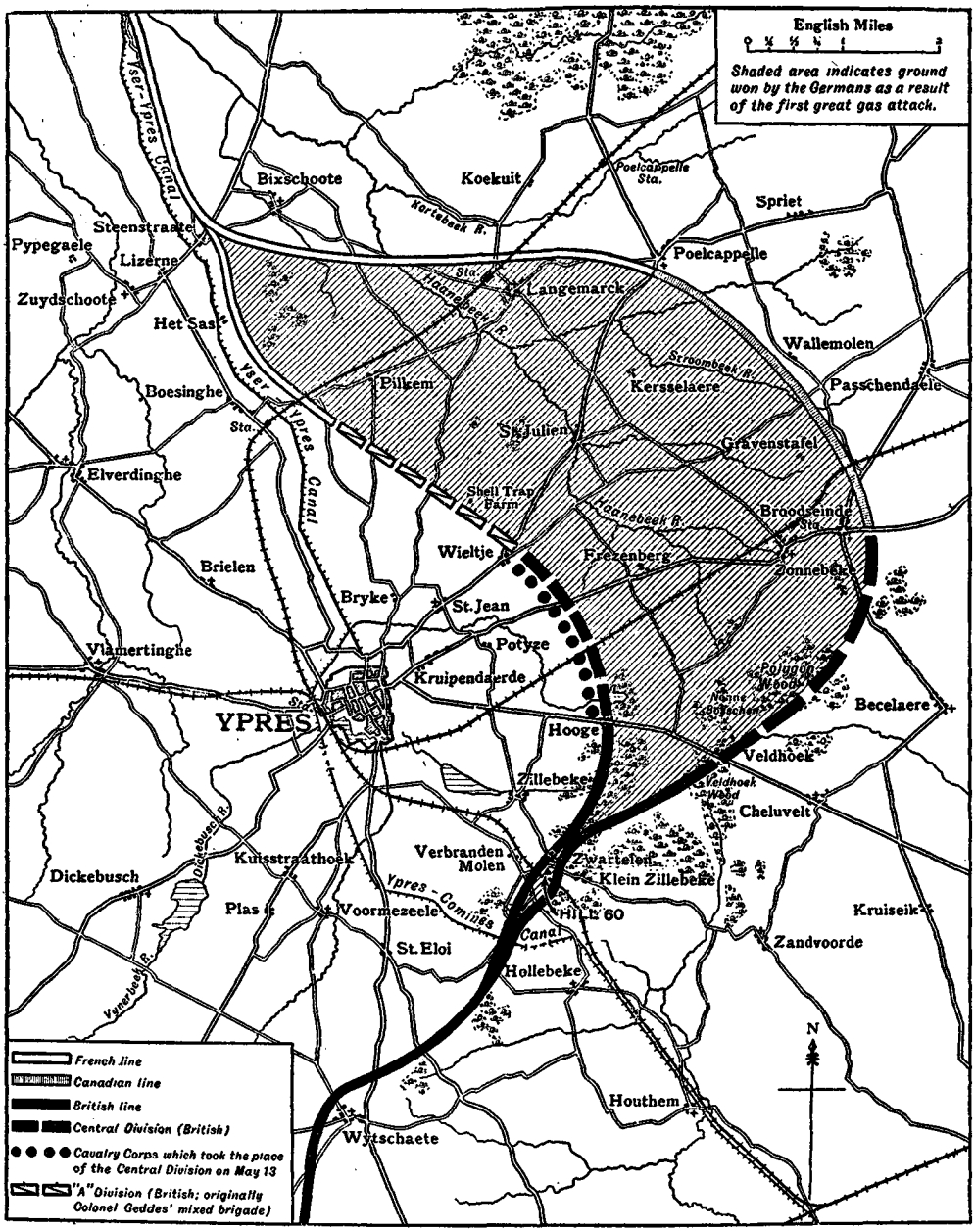
British trenches under shell fire

quently 2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry) were sent up to shake the hold which the Germans had secured at the base of the hill. The last supporting attack of the Yorkshiremen was made at seven o'clock in the evening of the 18th, and the Germans were swept from their hold. The ground won by the British was then consolidated, and the assaulters sat down grimly to hold on in face of an extremely heavy German bombardment of the positions won. Some of the shells may have been gas shells. It was reported on this date by officers in a dug-out immediately behind the fighting line that they experienced a feeling of suffocation, and that the candles in the shelter were extinguished by the noxious atmosphere. On Tuesday, 20th April, and on Wednesday, 21st April, till late in the afternoon, the German bombardment continued, interspersed with counter-attacks which had in their turn to be countered. The last effort on the British side was made by the 1st Devons, and then, although the Germans ran field-guns up close, the hill was finally held, and the enemy fire slackened under the British counter battery-work. The cost had been 100 officers and 3000 men out of action.

The suspicion that the Germans were using, or were about to use, poison gas, received confirmation almost immediately. Their secret had been well kept, but their preparations, which had taken the form of laying down pipes for the delivery of the fumes of chlorine gas in large volume, had occupied some time. The chlorine was readily procurable from the chemical factories on the Rhine, where it had been used in the manufacture of synthetic indigo, and where it could be produced cheaply on a large scale. It was the first of many gases[1] with which the Germans experimented, and was in one respect the most successful, because its use was almost entirely unexpected, and its appearance and suffocating effects overwhelmed many of the troops it attacked.

A recapitulation of the positions held will make clearer the effects produced by the use of the gas in stampeding part of the line. On the 22nd of April the Belgians still held the flooded Yser Canal as far as Bixschoote. There the line was taken over by French Colonial and Territorial troops. Their sector extended to the Ypres-Poelcappelle road, a mile east of Langemarck, where they joined the British 5th Corps, consisting here of the Canadian Division and the 28th and 27th British Divisions, whose line bent round south, outside of Polygon Wood, to Hill 60. The Germans had been observed to be concentrating opposite the French, where they had their 26th Corps (Duke of Württemberg) and on 20th and 21st April they bombarded Ypres and the lines of communication. About 5 p.m. on the 22nd they opened a heavy bombardment from Bixschoote to Langemarck covering the French line and the left of the Canadian sector. It was a sullen afternoon with a light southerly breeze, and about five o'clock jets of vapour shot up from the German trenches. These gathered and settled in a greenish-yellow cloud which swiftly drifted, touching the ground over no-man's-land, towards the French lines. The French troops, staring over their parapets, found themselves clutched by the throat by this gas, which immediately attacks the larynx and lung passages, and produces temporary or complete asphyxiation, very painful in its immediate effects, and very dangerous afterwards. The effect on the French-colonial soldiers was disastrous. Many were immediately put out of action and fell gasping for breath: their comrades, seized with explicable terror, fled from their trenches. Some ran stumblingly towards Ypres: others went westwards over the canal. The Germans, advancing behind their protective gas cloud, merely walked into the abandoned network of first- and second-line trenches, capturing several thousands of dazed, stupefied, or insensible prisoners, eight batteries of French field-guns, and four British 4.7's which had been placed in a wood behind the French positions. The two British officers in charge of these guns died beside them. A gap five miles wide was left in the front lines, and for some hours there were no troops between the Germans and Ypres in this sector. Fortunately the Germans, surprised at the effect

[1] The number of gases employed or tried was between thirty and forty.




The Ypres Salient before and after the Second Battle of Ypres, 22nd April–13th May

of their blow, stopped to consolidate their position and did not press on.

The Germans had not anticipated the magnitude of their success, and they were not ready to send in cavalry, the preparations for the use of which, on the part of Sir John French, one of their *communiqués* ridiculed. But their commanders on the spot were sufficiently alive to the possibilities of the situation to endeavour by turning eastwards to roll up the Canadians, whose flank had been left in the air by the sudden

French withdrawal. On the exposed flank were Royal Highlanders and 48th Highlanders (both 3rd Brigade) with the 8th and 5th Canadians. General Turner, commanding the 3rd Brigade, extended his men so as to form a defensive flank, and this thin line was furiously assailed by the German fire, as well as by the relics of the gas. But the German infantry, advancing to make good the position, were met by a blast of rapid fire so effectual that they recoiled; and by midnight two reserve battalions, 10th Canadians and Canadian Scottish, sent up in haste from Ypres, stormed the wood where the lost 4.7's had been installed, and drove the Germans temporarily out of it. This diversion confused the Germans, and gave time for the British reinforcements to arrive. The first were the cavalry — de Lisle's 1st Cavalry Division — and the 2nd East Yorks, which served to support the French. After them came the 1st Canadian Brigade, thrown into the gap from Pilkem. Nearer to the St. Julien wood were the two Canadian battalions which had stormed it, and on their right other six Canadian battalions on an obtuse front, with a flank bent north-west. The most exposed part of this flank was held by the 13th Royal Canadian Highlanders, on whom the fiercest German fire impinged.

On the morning of the 23rd the position was still perilous. The gap was five miles wide and two deep; the canal had been forced, the Germans were in Lizerne on the farther side, and on the eastern side approached Boesinghe. The Canadian 1st Brigade was here, however, just in touch with the exhausted French battalions, and, though the continuity of the line was insecure, it could be strengthened — and was. Battalions from the rest camps were hastily thrown in and placed under the command of Colonel Geddes. Geddes's detachment, 2nd Buffs, 3rd Middlesex (part), 1st York and Lancasters, 5th Royal Lancasters, 4th Royal Brigade, 2nd Cornwalls, 9th Royal Scots, 2nd Shropshires (half) played the part of an army on that day. They advanced to plug the gap; and to attack. They could not press the Germans back, but they pinned them to their positions for three days. Their losses, which included that of their leader, were very heavy; but their names are inscribed immemoriably on the records of the Second Battle of Ypres. In the afternoon of the 23rd they were joined in their advance by the shaken but rehabilitated remnants of the French 45th Division, and by the Canadians (1st and 4th Battalions, 1st Canadian Brigade). Though a barrier of a kind had thus been formed on the left of the position, the obtuse Canadian salient on the right was subjected to the heaviest hammering, and while on the 23rd of April the situation had been improved it was still critical. On 24th April it became clear that this advanced angle could not be held; and the 3rd Canadian Brigade fell slowly back on to and through the village of St. Julien. A detachment of Canadians, fighting as long as its ammunition lasted, was trapped in the village. This retirement left the 2nd Canadian Brigade's flank exposed; but their commander, by refusing this flank, managed to hold his position till reinforcements of three battalions, 1st Suffolks, London Rangers, and 1st Monmouths, under Colonel Wallace (84th Brigade) came up. They were later joined by the 9th Durhams, and the line was just held. The position on this most critical day has been defined as that of clumps of British holding their ground against the increasing weight of the German attack.

On the 25th reinforcements were got up, and behind the screen of a line which, reckoning from the right, was in the following order: 27th and 28th Divisions, 2nd Canadian Brigade, one battalion 1st Canadian Brigade, Wallace's detachment, and remnants of 3rd Canadian Brigade, Geddes's detachment, and 13th Brigade — General Hull was placed in charge of an attack. It had not weight enough to get forward, and its constituents of the 10th Brigade, 1st Royal Irish, and Northumberland Territorials, sufficed only to support the other hard-tried battalions in holding it. Meanwhile another German attack developed at Broodseinde, five miles away from St. Julien, on the front of the 28th Division. It was beaten off, though the flank of the

85th Brigade, which, with the 84th, bore the brunt of the fighting, was at one time in peril. But here, as on the Canadian front, the resistance was sufficient, though at great cost to the defenders, to hold the Germans back, and by night it became possible to relieve a large portion of the tried Canadian Division by the Lahore Indian Division. At the same time a fresh French Division (152nd, General de Ligne) came up from the south, two others being on their way. The situation was consequently so much brightened that General Smith-Dorrien, in charge of the Second Army, was encouraged to set a counter-attack in motion, in conjunction with the French. The attack extended from Boesinghe to Zonnebeke, and was pushed strongly towards Lizerne. The Indian Division (Jullundur, Ferozepore, and Sirhind Brigades), on the French right, advanced over a mile in face of the German fire and was brought only to a halt by gas. The troops dug themselves in, though hundreds were gassed before the cloud passed over. The French advance also gained ground and was also held up by gas. Farther east another fine advance by the Northumberland Brigade reached the outskirts of St. Julien, but could not hold it. An attack on the 28th Division was beaten off only by hard fighting; and thus it became impossible for any part of the hard-held line to give help to any other in exploiting a success. Every sector had to stand on its own bottom.

The north-east wind, which enabled the Germans still to utilize their gas, held on the 27th. The French made slight progress, especially between Boesinghe and Lizerne, and the Indians (Sirhind Brigade) held their own, which was, in fact, as much as could be expected. They were supported later in the day by another of the scratch detachments from reserves: 2nd Cornwalls, 2nd West Ridings, 5th King's Own, 1st York and Lancaster, under Colonel Tuson, the greater part of which had belonged to the Geddes detachment; and late in the evening the French Moróccans came forward again to strengthen the line. No advance of importance could be made: none indeed could be expected, for the action fought by French and British was of the nature of a defensive attack. Yet each day that passed, in spite of its hard fighting and losses and its apparent inconclusiveness, weakened the German prospects of success. By the 28th the French had cleared the western side of the canal and on the east had come up to Steenstraate; and the Indian, Canadian, and the rest of the British line was established temporarily too firmly in its position to offer any temptation to the Germans to attack it further. The net result of the five days' fighting had been to bring the Germans two miles nearer to Ypres on a five-mile front, to give the Allies a worse line to hold, and the loss of several thousands of prisoners, besides eight batteries of French field-guns and four British guns of position.[1] The Allied casualties altogether were nearly 25,000; the Germans estimated theirs at 16,000, from the two corps, the 26th and 27th, engaged, but they brought up other units, and it is not unlikely that the killed and wounded on either side were very nearly equal in number. In this hard-fought battle the British over the whole area involved employed seven divisions.

The loss of ground was such that it became imperative to shorten the line to straighten out the dangerous angle at Zonnebeke, and to bring the eastern line of the greater salient two miles nearer Ypres. On Sunday, 2nd May, a German gas attack on the north of Ypres on the French and the British 12th Brigade (east of St. Julien), and the remains of the 11th and 10th Brigades, and a further attack on 3rd May, emphasized the soundness of Sir John French's decision that it was time for some such readjustment to take place, and on the night of 3rd May, the general retirement was carried out. It was effected with the greatest skill under General Plumer. The 4th Division on the north did not retire, but was the hinge on which the 27th and 28th Divisions swung back. The 4th Division was greatly helped by French artillery. The new line just covered Frezenberg, the Bellewarde Woods, and Hooge. But even this line was difficult to hold. At that time no effective protection against gas had been devised, and on 5th

[1] The lost British battery was recaptured by the Canadians at the point of the bayonet, but the guns had already been destroyed by the enemy.

May Hill 60, which had previously been submerged by the chlorine on 1st May with resultant heavy losses, was finally captured by these means and remained in German hands.

The Germans after their first surprise accommodated their artillery to the new situation, and began a heavy bombardment of the Bellewarde lines on 8th May. The brunt of it was borne by the 4th Division and the 28th Division, which joined with the 27th Division to continue the line to the 5th Division and the south. The bombardment was of the kind which afterwards, increasingly magnified, became the stereotyped preliminary to an attack. The infantry attack which followed was repulsed with heavy loss on the front of the 4th Division, though it temporarily occupied Wieltje, where the 28th Division joined on. At Frezenberg, which was held by the 83rd Brigade of the 28th Division, the assault, preceded by gas, threw back the defenders and left in the air the flank of the 80th Brigade, which belonged to the adjoining 27th Division. The Princess Patricia's Canadians at the junction held their position at great cost, with success. Adjoining the 83rd Division, on the other side of it, was the 84th; this also was borne back after losing heavily. Counter-attacks were organized in the afternoon at Wieltje and at Frezenberg, and these recovered part of the ground which the Germans had cleverly selected for attack. On the 9th, 10th, and 11th the Germans tested the 80th and 81st Brigades (27th Division) which stood on either side of the Menin road, while continuing their heavy shelling of the rest of the front.

These were the days when the German superiority in armament and ammunition was most severely felt. In Great Britain the factories for supplying guns and ammunition in the quantities needed were only then being built, and American ammunition was no more than a well-advertised myth. Germany, on the other hand was expanding her war-material factories, already so ample, every day: and, with the aid of the Austrian works at Skoda, could supply enough shells to overwhelm the Russians on the Eastern Front, while easily overweighting the Allies in the West. In the West, in short, the Germans could reckon on easily holding off the French and the British at long range by their superior weight of metal and machinery. Their attacks, thus aided, had worn so thin the British line that the 28th Division had to be relieved by the dismounted 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions under General de Lisle. The 1st took the line from Wieltje to Verlorenhoek; the 3rd carried it on to Hooge. Their appearance in the trenches was greeted by a fourteen-hour German bombardment on 12th May, and by an attack which was designed to give them no time to settle down. The line was temporarily driven in at the middle, but both flanks were held, and late in the day a counter-attack was attempted with partial success at the dented sector. The 27th Division, also severely bombarded during the day and attacked fiercely by infantry on the front of the 11th Brigade, held its ground in face of great difficulties and exhaustion, and the end of the day came with very little loss of ground on the whole front. Next day the German attacks died down.

The nine-day battle had inflicted on the British a loss of some 14,000 men and the three infantry and two cavalry divisions were worn very thin. The German losses are conjectural, but are probably to be rightly estimated at about the same figures, since none of their infantry attacks, though made over and over again, got home. The attack, however, had been nearly continuous on this front for nearly three weeks, and was broken off because the accumulation of shells had been temporarily exhausted.

After a ten days' lull the Germans attacked again on 24th May, sending in advance at dawn a poison gas-cloud which drifted down wind in a bank 3 miles in length and 40 feet in depth. The British forces had by this time been supplied with more or less effective forms of gas-masks; and the gas was therefore not so deadly an instrument as it had been. It was followed up with gas-shells and a very heavy bombardment. The gas-cloud struck the right of the 4th Division and the whole front of the 28th Division. The chief impact of the German attack which followed fell on the 12th and

10th Brigades, on the left of the British line. The left and centre of the 12th threw the Germans back to their trenches; the right was borne in. The line was re-formed at night a quarter of a mile back. The 85th Brigade, next in order, was assailed as heavily, and here the Buffs and the Fusiliers, having lost nearly all their officers, had to fall back into Bellewarde Wood, south of the railway. A counter-attack was made at night by the 84th Brigade and was pushed home, despite the loss of 75 per cent of the brigade's effectives. This action, the Battle of Bellewarde, was the last occasion on which chlorine gas was used on a great scale by the Germans. The British lost several thousands of men killed, wounded, and poisoned, but the line remained unaltered; and on 25th May it was reconsolidated and straightened out, joining the French at the same point as before, passing through Wieltje and the western end of Bellewarde Lake to Hooge. The French had gained compensation for the slight loss of ground in all sectors by recapturing Steenstraate and Het Sas; and the action of Bellewarde, the concluding stage in the Second Battle of Ypres, marked the end of the German attempts at this stage of the war to force a way through the salient. The attack, beginning on 22nd April and lasting till the end of May, must have cost the Allies and the Germans together some 100,000 wounded and killed.

Contemporaneously with the German attacks on the Bellewarde lines the French were attacking north of Arras; and this offensive went on throughout May. A supporting attack, costly in proportion to the numbers disposed of by the British Commander-in-Chief, was undertaken by Sir Douglas Haig and the First Army in order to prevent the Germans from sending reinforcements to the Arras front. These operations began on 9th May with an attack along a ten-mile front from Laventie in the north to Richebourg in the south. Rawlinson's 4th Corps undertook the more northerly movement at Rougebanc north-west of Fromelles; the Indian Corps and the 1st Corps were sent forward in the southern sector. The northern assault, entrusted to Lowry Cole and the 25th Brigade and other units of the 8th Division, ended in a disastrous repulse. The Germans were fully prepared for the attack, and their machine-guns swept the brigade back from the position it had seized in the first rush. The Indian Corps, advancing on the German lines to the north of Givenchy, could make no headway at all. The attack of the 1st Division, despite the gallantry and heroism with which the 3rd and 2nd Brigades in the earlier stages, and the 1st Guards Brigade, persevered with a hopeless task, was a failure comparable only to that inflicted on the 25th Brigade, and was magnified in losses proportionately. There was no mistake which can be specified in the preparations for the attack, and it was pushed with the greatest resolution. The explanation of its failure was that the Germans were prepared for it, their defences were too strong, especially in machine-guns, and our artillery preparation was entirely insufficient. It lasted only forty minutes; whereas, later in the war, bombardments of an immensely greater weight were continued for days and ended with a "drum fire" of high-explosives lasting for hours. The opening assault of the Richebourg battle was a hard lesson. It cost over 12,000 casualities and effected nothing.

It was imperative that the army should not accept such a repulse without attempt to retrieve it, and a rearrangement of forces was made as a prelude to another attack, the centre of which was at Richebourg l'Avoué, but the direction farther south in front of Festubert. The 2nd Division replaced the 1st in the Givenchy sector, and the 7th Division (4th Corps) was brought to the right of the 1st Corps—in the advance before midnight of 15th May (this hour being chosen to impart the element of surprise) the Indian Division was placed on the left and the 2nd Division on the right. The Indians were held up, but the 2nd Division (5th and 6th Brigades, 4th Guards Brigade in support) gained half a mile of German trenches to the depth of a quarter of a mile, and clung to it. Just before dawn another attack north of Festubert (20th and 22nd Brigades, 7th Division) made an opening equally successful, and also reached the Ger-

man second line. At night the Germans made a strong counter-attack which pushed back the extreme front of the advance made by the 7th Division; but by the morning of the 17th the two advances of the 2nd and 7th Divisions were fully maintained and had created a small, strongly-held German salient, 1000 yards in diameter, between them. This was reduced by hard fighting, and by the evening the British advance was cemented and had a width of 2 miles which was nevertheless very hard to hold, and still harder to amplify. The effort to do both continued for six days longer, the hard-working divisions on which had fallen the brunt of the action being relieved by the 51st Highland Territorials and the Canadians, and afterwards, as desultory, straggling attacks and counter-attacks followed one another, by the 17th London Territorial Division. The spring campaign, of which this and the Ypres battle were the concluding phases, ended with the beginning of June. It will have been observed that the New Armies were beginning to come into the firing line, and in Great Britain itself two movements were gathering impetus—the all-important expansion in the production of shells and artillery, and the inevitable progress towards compulsory military service.

For a long period the line, though never for a day quiescent, remained little altered, though it swayed in rather larger movements forward or backward in the neighbourhood of the trenches near Hooge, in the most northern sector of the line. Engagements took place here on 16th June, 30th July, and 9th August. During this period the armies were growing and the line lengthening, though slightly. It extended in two armies from Boesinghe to 6 miles south of the Bethune-la-Bassée canal. The Second Army (north) under Sir H. Plumer, who had succeeded Sir H. Smith-Dorrien, contained 13 divisions; the First Army—under Sir D. Haig—9 divisions, the approximate strength of the whole being some 650,000 men, though the bayonet strength was much smaller.

In order the forces, in June, 1915, were the 6th Army Corps (4th, 6th, and 49th Territorial Divisions), commanded by General Keir; next to them and nearer Hooge the 5th Army Corps (3rd, 14th, and 46th Territorial Divisions), under General Allenby; the 2nd Army Corps (5th, 28th, and 50th Territorial Divisions) under General Fergusson; and the 3rd Army Corps (Canadian 12th, 27th, and 8th Divisions) under General Pulteney. The First Army under Haig consisted of the Indian Corps (General Willcocks) with the 51st Highland Territorial Division attached, the 1st Corps and the 7th Division, part of Rawlinson's 4th Corps, 9th, 47th, and 48th Divisions.

The attack on June 16th was preceded on June 15th by a smaller Canadian assault at Givenchy, which was separate, but fruitless, and the same epitaph is to be written of the advance of the 7th Division and the 51st Highland Territorial Division on the next day. The 7th Division made two advances, one by night and one by day, employing single battalions, without achieving any result except losses. Of the components of the 51st Division, the 154th Brigade made an advance which was bravely urged but was foredoomed to failure, because it was caught by the German shells while the men were waiting to advance. The 6th Scottish Rifles and the 4th North Lancashires reached the German trenches and were helped by the 4th Royal Lancasters, but after a series of stubborn resistances the ragged line had to fall back. The 8th King's Liverpool tried to redeem the situation, but, gallantly as they fought, the task was beyond redemption. The 152nd Brigade was also held up; and the 51st Division lost 1500 men on the day. More success attended a well-planned attack, north of Hooge, where the German line formed a slight salient, by the 3rd Division (8th and 9th Brigade), helped by a sound preliminary bombardment, in which the guns of the French 36th Division supported the British artillery. The attack went forward to the cry of "Remember the *Lusitania*!" and the second line of German trenches was taken. The losses were heavy, partly because the stormers did not pause at their assigned objectives; but the engagement was to be counted as a victory, though a small one.

There was now a halt of some three weeks, broken by another dashing little success on 6th July, in which the 11th Brigade (4th Division) took and held a section of the German line at the extreme north of the British position where touch was maintained with the French Moroccans. As a set-off against these two successes the Germans attacked on 30th July the Hooge trenches, which had been taken by the British on 16th June, and were at this later date held by the 14th Light Infantry Division. This was the first of the New Army divisions to be engaged, and the salient attacked was held by the 41st Brigade, with the 7th and 8th Rifle Brigade. The attack began with a mine explosion, followed by the use of flame-throwers, used on the British for the first time. The front trenches were lost, and though the right of the brigade held on till night, the line had to be withdrawn to Sanctuary Wood. Two battalions of the 41st Brigade, which had just been withdrawn, were fetched back, and two other battalions, from the 42nd and 43rd Brigades respectively, were added, and were sent forward in a counter-attack. It failed, but was not entirely unproductive, though the losses of the 41st Brigade were extremely heavy, amounting to 2000 men and 60 officers. Desultory fighting went on for some days while a counter-attack on a larger scale was organized. This was entrusted to the 6th Division (General Congreve), and was, as attacks were then counted, very successful. The 18th Brigade on the right, and the 16th Brigade on the left, carried the German trenches and the mine crater. The position was well consolidated, and the German infantry attacks, which were quickly launched to retake the position, were very heavily punished. In this action the British losses in the advance were slight owing to very well-managed artillery support, and the German losses in counter-attack were large. Several hundreds of German prisoners were taken.

During August activity on the Western Front was slight. The British were awaiting men and munitions, and the flow of the former was recognizable by the formation of a Third Army, under General Monro, consisting of the 7th Corps and the 10th Corps. The formation was accompanied by an extension of the British line, which took over a sector on the other side of General Foch and the French Tenth Army before Lens. This sector extended from south of Arras to north of Albert. Foch and the French Tenth Army were to co-operate with the British attack projected for the autumn, and intended to coincide with the much greater French attack in Champagne.

The British share in the attempt to shake the German western line in 1915 was fought in front of Hulluch and Loos, and is conveniently named the Battle of Loos. For four days preceding September 25th, incessant bombardment was made of the German positions, especially immediately south of the La Bassée Canal, and cylinders for the projected gas attack were got into position. (The use of gas having been forced on the Allies, their investigation of its possibilities was thorough, and ultimately the methods originated by British chemists and physicists may be said to have outgassed the Germans. Much of the ablest work both in attack and in anti-asphyxiation devices was done by Lieutenant-Colonel (Professor) W. Watson, F.R.S., and Lieutenant-Colonel Baker of the Royal College of Science. The first of these, whose health had been undermined in the course of his investigations, died in the London hospital after the Armistice, and science was thus robbed of a most valued and brilliant investigator.)

The main assault was to be delivered by Haig's First Army (1st Corps under Hubert Gough, north, and 4th Corps under Rawlinson, south), from La Bassée Canal in the north to Grenay in the south. The road from Vermelles to Hulluch bisected the front and determined the sectors of advance of the respective corps. The bombardment which paved a way for them had been heavy, measured by the 1915 standards, though it was known beforehand that there had been many parts of the German defences along the 7-mile front which were far from obliterated by it. This circumstance prejudiced the whole action, which was from the beginning held up on its left flank, on, and south of the La Bassée Canal. The 2nd Division (Horne) was employed here: and of the brigades two (5th and 6th) were north

GENERAL SIR JAMES WILLCOCKS, K.C.B.

*From a photograph by Elliott & Fry*

FIELD-MARSHAL LORD PLUMER, G.C.B.

*From a photograph by Bassano*

GENERAL LORD RAWLINSON, K.C.M.G.

*From a photograph by Russell & Sons*

GENERAL SIR WILLIAM R. ROBERTSON, G.C.B.

*From a photograph by Elliott & Fry*

of the canal, and one (19th) south of it. The 5th Brigade was not employed in the main advance, the 6th was held up by wire, and the same impassable obstacle awaited the 19th. The troops of these brigades got up to the wire and could get no farther: the most they could do was to hold on, hammered by German guns, and poisoned by the relics of our own gas, which eddied back among them. The failure, reflecting no discredit on the infantry, which was attacking one of the strongest positions, left the German artillery at Auchy competent to throw in an outflanking fire on the rest of the advance.

The task and the fate of the 9th Division next to the 2nd in line were not less unfortunate. The 28th Brigade was on the left, the 26th on the right, with the 27th in support. In front of them was the Hohenzollern Redoubt, jutting forward from the main German line, and most formidably protected within and without; and behind the redoubt lay the slag heap, Fosse 8. The 28th Brigade came to a full stop against the undemolished obstacles in its path. Riddled with machine-guns, cut down by the flanking fire from the Auchy batteries, the men died while they struggled with the barbed wire. Those—a desperate few—who got through were killed or had to struggle back. All they could do was to re-form to sustain an expected counter-attack. The repulse of the 28th Brigade was complete. It was scarcely compensated by the remarkable success of the 26th Brigade on its right. The leading battalions of this brigade, 5th Camerons, led by Lochiel, 7th Seaforths, followed by 8th Gordons, and the Black Watch, went on like a pack of football forwards, and by their speed and decision reached Fosse 8. The reserve brigade, 27th (11th and 12th Royal Scots, 6th Scots, 10th and 11th Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders), pressed after them and strengthened the position; the field-guns were brought up quickly and gave them good support.

The 7th Division on the right wing of Gough's 1st Army Corps did as well as the 9th Division. Its leading brigades (22nd on the left and 20th on the right) went forward with the greatest precision, and, adding dash to coolness, took the first line of German trenches in their stride. The left-hand brigade established contact with the advance of the 9th Division: the right-hand brigade (20th) reached the quarries in front of Hulloch, taking eight guns. Another small village, Cité St. Elie, north of Hulluch, was also reached. The advance had not been made without loss, and the division, withdrawing a little from the brunt of its advance, rested on the quarries.

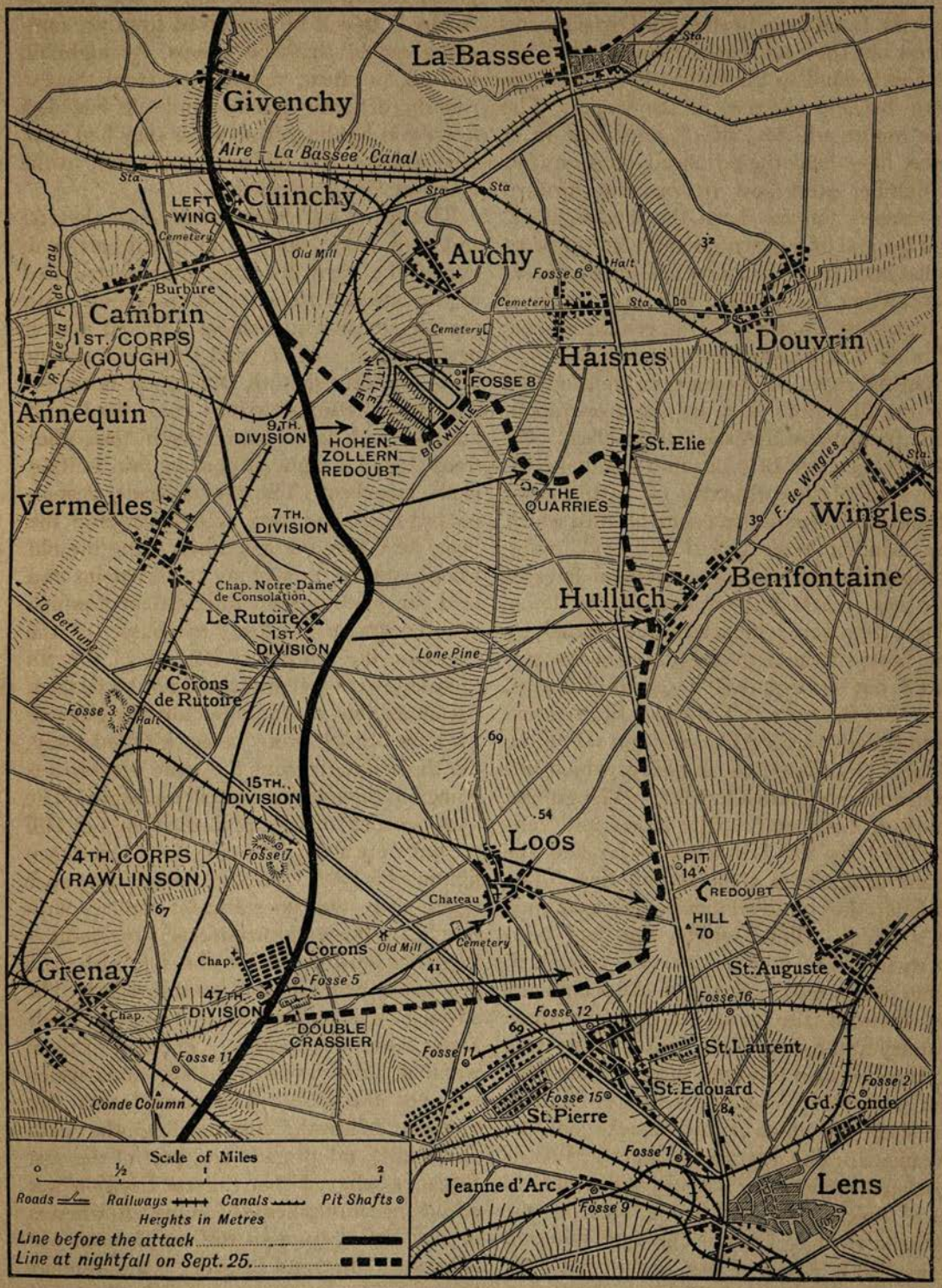
The results of the attack of the 1st Army Corps north of the Vermelles-Hulluch road thus might be summed up as a repulse on the left, and successes at the centre on the right. The 4th Army Corps attacking south of the road had a similar patchwork of experience. Its 1st Division, on the left, was held up, and this stoppage made insecure such advance as the middle division, the 15th Scottish (New Army) could effect; while on the right the 47th London Territorial Division got so well forward as to establish the reputation of the "Cockneys" as fighters. To return to the work of the individual divisions: both the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the 1st Division found the wire only partially cut, and the 1st Brigade's advance towards Hulluch was slow and dearly bought, though it got close to the point assigned to it. The 2nd Brigade, which was to have reached the "Chalk Pit" and Fosse 14, found the German trenches in front of it almost undamaged, and the progress of the assaulters was consequently even slower than that of their colleagues of the 1st Brigade. It was not till daylight was failing that the 2nd Brigade could join the 1st in an advance on the Lens-Hulluch road (which ran roughly parallel to the front of the attack) and the 3rd Brigade could come up to support the right.

The delay in this advance had exposed the left flank of the division next in line (the 15th Scottish) which was timed to have arrived at Fosse 14 simultaneously with the 1st, but which arrived there some hours before the others. The 46th Brigade was the most exposed. It had made a very fine advance, taking Fosse 14 in its stride, and eventually streaming up the long slope of Hill 70. The 45th supporting Brigade came after them. On the right of these the 44th Brigade, moving divergently, had dashed forward as

far as Loos, where in the main street they met the Londoners of the 47th Division, and threw out their left fanwise towards Hill 70, to give a hand to the battered troops of the 46th Brigade clinging to the slope. The line might possibly, by digging itself in at once, have held the advanced position, but a number were lost by pushing forward mistakenly too far down the reverse slope, and the end of the day found the line of Scots fallen back from their first holding to a position farther back, which they maintained at a high cost, in spite of the reinforcements of other Scottish regiments sent up.

On the right, the Londoners, consolidated for the first time in a divisional operation, had greatly distinguished themselves. On the left the 141st Brigade (18th London Irish and 20th Blackheath) went off with a rush, typified by the regimental football with which the London Irish kicked off, and, going straight through the three German lines of trenches, reached the south end of Loos. There they were joined, as already stated, by the Scots of the 44th Brigade, and the two threw out or captured the 23rd Silesians, who held the town. The 140th Brigade had been equally businesslike, and had seized the Double Crassier—twin slag heaps which had been converted into a redoubt. The ground south of Loos was rapidly seized and consolidated by the Londoners, who had the 142nd Brigade in their second line. The situation thus outlined may be now examined as a whole. The German line had been eaten into, but nowhere pierced, though at some points only one line of entrenchments lay between the attackers and the open country to the east. But in that one line were entrenched men to whom supports could be, and were being, rapidly hurried up, and in the shelter of which counter-attacks could be organized. The newly won, imperfectly consolidated British line was very vulnerable to such attacks. It was strong only at the extreme right of Loos. The 15th Division immediately north of that had to fall back from Hill 70 to the line of the Lens-La Bassée road. The 7th and 9th Divisions still held, but precariously, the western outskirts of Hulluch, the edge of St. Elie, the quarries, and Fosse 8; but on the extreme left were exposed to the damaging fire of the guns of Auchy. It will be perceived from the foregoing recital that the troops, by nightfall, had all, or most, fallen back from the extremity of their gains: and all had lost heavily in holding on to what they had won. The struggle was hardest on the left, in the neighbourhood of Fosse 8.

Two divisions, untried heretofore, the 21st and 24th, were brought up in support, and, except the 73rd Brigade, were distributed in the advance trenches to co-operate with the 1st Division in making a united assault past Hulluch. (The 73rd Brigade was sent up to reinforce the 9th Division at Fosse 8.) The new divisions arrived cold, tired, and hungry, and in common with the other troops spent a night of pouring rain waiting in the trenches. The 73rd Brigade, despite its handicap, did very well in helping the Scots near Fosse 8, and all day long the old troops and the new clung to this point and held the place against intermittent German counter-attacks. Close to Fosse 8 the Quarries, the temporary holding of the 7th Division, were lost and could not be retaken. All along this northern sector the gains of the first onrush were being whittled away. On the southern front the same process was going on, though not over all its length. The 15th Scottish still clung to the slopes of Hill 70, but were always slipping down, each man fighting his own stubborn battle; for, once again, there was no sufficient artillery support. In these unpropitious surroundings the advance ordered for the 1st, 24th, and part of the 21st Division went forward. The advance was misconceived: it was made under misapprehensions. The first of them was that Hulluch was in British hands, which was not the case. The second was that General Mitford, commanding the 24th Division (72nd Brigade and part of the 71st Brigade) believed that the 1st Division was advancing simultaneously on his left, whereas in fact, the advance of the 1st Division was delayed. The 72nd Brigade, 71st in support (24th Division) advancing very well, found themselves enfiladed by the unsilenced German machine-guns in Hulluch. They went on, nevertheless, after a fruitless attempt to stop the German machine-gun




The Main British Attack: map showing approximately the battle-lines of the First Army under Sir Douglas Haig at daybreak and at nightfall on 25th September, 1915

fire for themselves, and pushed forward across the Lens-Hulluch road till they came right up against the German wire. They tried in vain to get through; they were thrown back, and their losses in retirement were added to those in the advance. The best commentary on the mistaken character of the effort they were called on to make, and the mistakes in staff work which permitted it, is that the 72nd Brigade lost 78 officers and 2000 men out of the 3600 with which it set out.

The movements of the 21st Division can be recited only in fragments, because the division was broken up before going into action. The 62nd Brigade was taken away to reinforce the 15th Scottish Division south-east of Loos, and to maintain contact with the 47th (London Territorial) Division, and this task was accomplished with great credit.

The main attack of the other part of the division, consisting of the 63rd and 64th Brigades was made against a considerable line of obstacles, the Chalk Pit on one side of the Lens-Hulluch road, and the Fosse 14 and the Bois Hugo, a large plantation which was a machine-gun nest, on the other. The brigades had scarcely set out on their advance before they became involved in what was probably a simultaneous counter-attack by the Germans. The result was that the attack was thrown back, and the assaulting brigade, the supports (64th Brigade), and the Divisional artillery suffered severely. (The losses of the two supporting divisions were together 8000.) Moreover, their repulse, so far from turning the tide of battle in our favour, compelled the withdrawal of the men of the Scottish Division from Hill 70.

Fortunately the right flank of the British line held firm, and formed a very useful corner-stone on which to rally and reorganize. The 47th Division had broadened and strengthened its hold in the environs of Loos; and though this was an insufficient set-off against the mile of the Lens-Hulluch-La Bassée road that had been lost, an attempt was made, by bringing up the Guards and 28th Divisions, to improve the situation. But the exhausting Sunday was followed by a black Monday morning, for quite early the Germans began a heavy bombardment of Fosse 8, held by the new 73rd Brigade and the remains of the worn 26th, and, following it up with a strong infantry attack, captured that key position. Till midday the situation was dark indeed. Then the Guards Division (the Earl of Cavan) was sent forward, operating on roughly the same line as the 21st Division. The 1st Brigade was in touch with the 7th Division, the 2nd Brigade in the centre, the 3rd Brigade extending to Loos. The division had in front of it Chalk Pit Wood, Fosse 14, and Hill 70. During the night of the 26th–27th many stragglers from the unsuccessful attack of the 21st and 24th Divisions came back through the Guards' lines, and in the afternoon the bombardment of the German posts facing them was renewed.

The 2nd Brigade had the 2nd Irish as its spearhead, with the 1st Coldstream in support, and advancing at four o'clock made good Chalk Pit Wood in front of it. On its right the 1st Scots passed through a heavy fire to carry Fosse 14 by storm. This they did, carrying some of the Irish Guards with them: but pushing forward two impetuously were caught in a heavy German counter-attack, borne back, and lost the position they had won. A renewed attack failed, and Chalk Pit Wood was in danger of being lost. It was, however, held all night against a very heavy and accurate bombardment, and was not again ceded. The 3rd Brigade, meanwhile, advancing at the same time as the 2nd, had made the summit of Hill 70, Welsh Guards and Grenadiers leading, but the troops could not hold it in face of the German fire, and so sank behind the summit and dug themselves in. Chalk Pit Wood and the slope of Hill 70 marked the line henceforward, and the Guards Division had paid 3000 casualties to draw it. They continued to hold the line till the end of the month, when two brigades (35th and 36th) of the 12th Division temporarily relieved them. The 15th Division (Scottish) had also been withdrawn, having suffered 6000 casualties —an almost unprecedented proportion.

The end of the Battle of Loos was not yet, for it was not possible to break off the action at any chosen moment. But General Foch, at Sir John French's request, sent the French

9th Corps, Tenth Army, to take over the defence of Loos on the 28th, and the units of the British line were rearranged. The 28th Division had come up after the Guards, and had been designed to restore the balance on the left while the Guards operated on the right. General Bulfin, who commanded, and who took over the command of the 9th Division as well, owing to the death of General Thesiger—killed by a shell just before the German counter-attack on Fosse 8 on the 27th—found that his supports were urgently required. Fosse 8 had been lost, the hold on the Hohenzollern Redoubt imperilled in consequence, and the Quarries wrested from the 7th Division. The 85th Brigade was sent forward to the succour of the 26th and 73rd Brigades huddled on the edge of the big redoubt, and restored that position, pushing the Germans back through the support trench, known as "Little Willie", leading northwards. An attack was organized on Fosse 8 (on the morning of the 28th; the 85th Brigade came into action on the 27th), but it could not be taken from the Germans, for though the summit was reached, it was swept continually by their fire. It had to be resigned to them, and the 28th Division had to accept the humbler but necessary task of preventing further loss of ground. On 1st October, they tried to make stronger their hold on the Hohenzollern Redoubt by clearing more decisively the "Little Willie" trench; but the gain was only temporary.

The action was now dying down, but on 3rd October flared up again at the instance of the Germans, who forced their way back into the greater part of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, aided by their machine-guns at Fosse 8, and the artillery position at Auchy, whose undisturbed possession had so undermined the whole of the British success. A strong attack on the other sector of the 28th Division, between the quarries and the bisecting road, was repelled. On 4th and 5th October the Guards Division, after its very brief period of rest, was brought up to relieve the 28th Division, and at the same time the 1st Division relieved the 12th Division on the immediate right of the new positions assigned to the Guards. This stiffening of the line was in anticipation of a more concerted German counter-attack. The expectations were fulfilled: and on 8th October the positions of assaulter and defender were reversed. The German attack was made along the whole front of the British gains from the Hohenzollern Redoubt to Loos, which the French held for us, and involved, from left to right, the 7th, the Guards, the 12th, the 1st Division, and the French 9th Corps. A specially fierce attack was made against the trench held by the Guards and running from the Hohenzollern Redoubt, known as "Big Willie". The Germans bombed their way in only to be bombed out again. Another principal point of assault was the Chalk Pit, which, together with its neighbourhood, was held by the 1st Division. Here the Germans, debouching from the Bois Hugo, suffered very heavily, and they lost in equally great numbers in their attack on the French, whose 75's lived up to their reputation. The German counter-attack of the 8th October failed in every sector, and must have been extremely costly.

The greater part of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, which had for a space been British, was, however, again in German hands, and on the 13th an attempt was made to take it from them once more. The assault was entrusted to the 46th North Midland Territorial Division, which was brought up from reserve; and associated with this attack were others west of Hulluch (1st Division) and at the Quarries (12th Division). The attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt was a high trial for troops not yet experienced in divisional assault, and their task was made severer by inadequate artillery preparation. It was a task too heavy on the right, where the attack was held in front of the eastward-running "Big Willie" trench; but on the left, where the guns made more impression, Leicesters and Lincolns swarmed over the whole of the redoubt up to Fosse Trench. Thereafter the attack resolved itself into a bombing encounter, in which the Midlanders got into both the communication trenches, "Big" and "Little Willie". In the end, after forty-eight hours of assault, of holding on, of bombing and counter-bombing attacks,

the Germans were driven from the western side of the redoubt and the British line established there.

For their success, which was of moral rather than great material value while Fosse 8 remained in enemy hands, the Midland Division paid 4000 casualties. The set-off against this cost was not the ground, but the hard experience which was grinding the battalions of the New Army into veterans; and was incidentally proving to the soldiers, from private to Commander-in-Chief, the ability of the Germans in fighting tactics —especially of the offensive-defensive kind. There was no breezy optimism at the front, though high courage and determination were never lacking there. On the same day that the Midland Division bought its experience, the 12th Division and the 1st Division had been sent forward. The 12th Division was called on for a strong demonstration: the 1st Division broke into the German trenches over a 1000-yards front, but could not hold them. This practically brought to an end the Battle of Loos, except for a brisk little attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 20th October. The net result was a gain of 7000 yards of front to an average depth of 2 miles. Some 3000 German prisoners were taken, including 57 officers; and 26 guns. The British lost by German counter-attacks 1000 prisoners, and the losses to the British forces in the three weeks of fighting, which began on 25th September, were not fewer than 50,000 men and 2000 officers permanently or temporarily out of action. A large proportion were of course only temporarily lost; but the number of killed was heavy.

Subsidiary actions, the losses of which are included, were fought on 25th September by the 2nd Division astride the La Bassée Canal, by the 58th Brigade, 19th Division, north of Givenchy; by the Indians at Neuve Chapelle, and by their neighbours, the 60th Brigade of the 20th Division. The 8th Division was engaged in similar operations in the neighbourhood of the Bois Grenier. In all these movements a small advance was made, and was then relinquished under the pressure of the German counter-attacks. The same may be said of a larger-scale demonstration in force set in motion by the 5th Corps (now under General Allenby) over the old ground of Bellewarde and the Menin road. It was an operation which served its purpose, as the others did, of detaining bodies of German troops, but it was, also like the other attacks, from that of the 5th Brigade at the La Bassée Canal to the 14th Division at Ypres, costly of lives, and fruitful only in bloody experience. That summary might fitly apply to a great part of the work which fell on the growing British armies in the West, during a year which was one of a saddening realization of the immensity of the task that lay before Great Britain in resuming her ancient position as the Keeper of the Balance of Power in Europe.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FRENCH FRONT IN 1915

In bending the German line at any of its sectors the British army, when regard is had for its size and inexperience, and its shortage of machinery, accomplished in 1915 a considerable feat. The Germans opened the war with a tremendous start of their adversaries in preparedness, and it should have been obvious from the beginning that this start could only be reduced after a long interval, and by armies at least as capable and well-found as those which Germany could put into the field. Germany had been beaten at the Marne by her own breathless effort, as well as by an adversary who struck her at the exact moment when she was winded; and she did not at once recover her balance even when sunk in the well-chosen defences of the Aisne. But as month after

month went by, her defences, elastic and inelastic, became ever stronger, and thrusts which might have disturbed her while she was staggering, left her firm upon her entrenched feet throughout the months of 1915, whether the blow was levelled by the British, who were learning warfare on the large scale, or by the French, who could not give to the Germans their great handicap in shells and artillery and yet beat them.

A careful examination of the phases of the war will show that every advance, abortive or productive, which either side made, was based on a superiority, either temporary or permanent, of shells, as well as of rifles. This applied even to the Battle of the Marne, where the Germans had temporarily lost their great superiority. The Germans, who were the most practised theorists in large-scale warfare, judged quickly and rightly that their great advantage in armament would be sufficient to hold off any Franco-British offensive in the West in 1915. By the end of the year they had confirmed the rightness of their judgment, and the French and British commanders had become converts to it, if indeed they had needed conversion. But whatever the belief of the Allied Chiefs on the vulnerability of the German line, it was impossible that they should leave it untested, and the need for attacking it became imperative when the Germans, carrying to a logical issue the second part of their theory, massed their forces, and as much of their artillery as they could spare, to smash the Russian front.

While Great Britain was still rather slowly getting to work on munition factories, and France, a little more swiftly, was enlarging those she had, and expediting their output, Germany was already setting in motion that mobilization of her whole people on war work which the other belligerents adopted later. She was more ready; she had greater reserves to begin with; she began to heap up new supplies at a far greater rate. In respect of men she still had great forces in the West; too great for France to undertake too many risks in breaking her line, for the French army in 1915 was, to the Allies' land forces, what the British fleet was to their navies. Those which Germany had, she reorganized and redistributed. The new formations which she had sent into the first battle of Ypres, and which consisted of Landwehr, Landsturm, and under-aged recruits, had not been a great success. She now began, to use a French phrase, to *ménager les hommes*, and to form divisions of which the three infantry regiments were first-line trained troops—afterwards, under the war's modifications, becoming "shock troops"—and the others divisional troops, with the exception of the strong artillery regiments with which each division was equipped. These assaulting divisions were distributed along the line. The gaps created in the first-line corps were filled with the less capable troops.

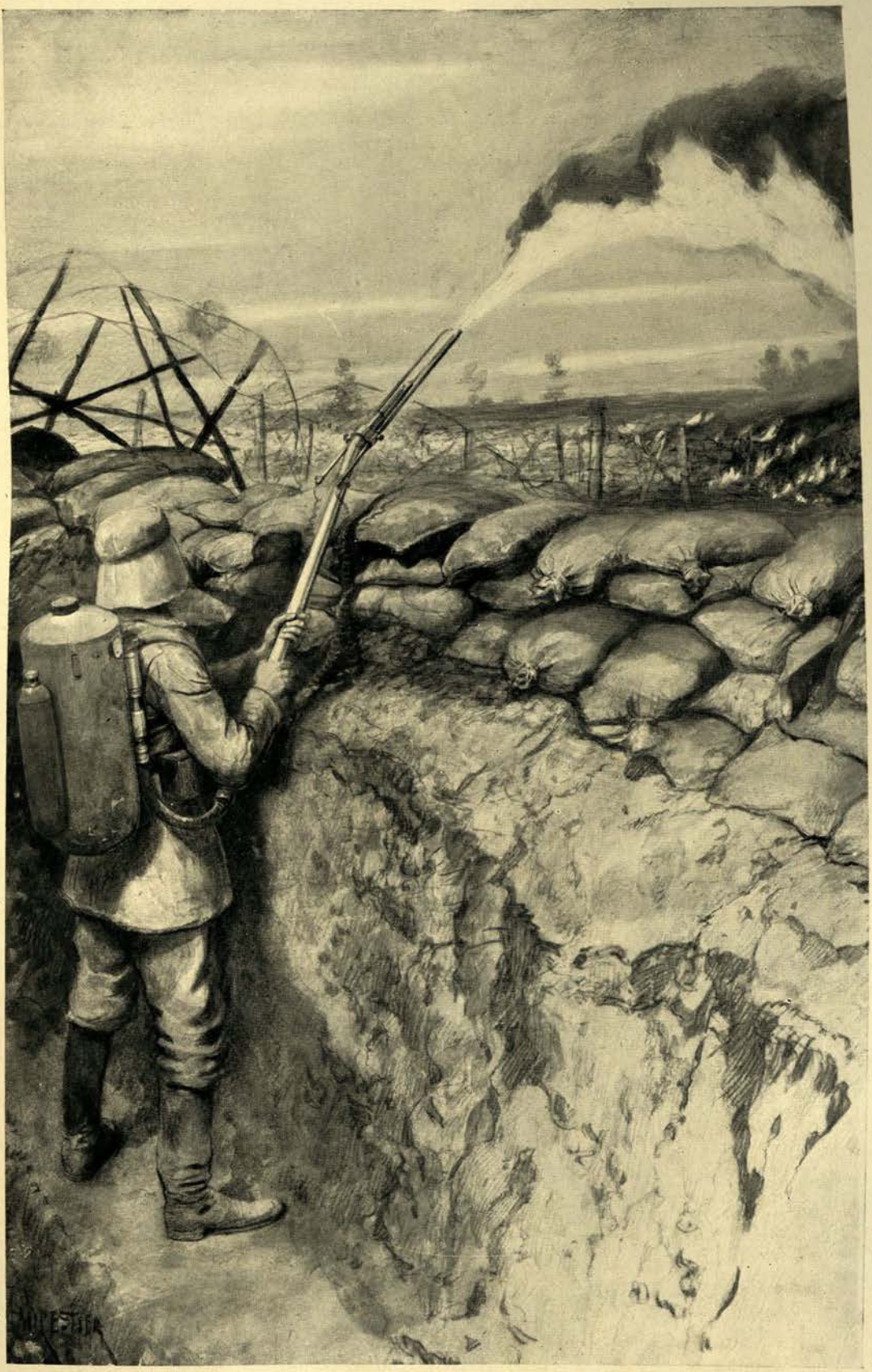
Moreover, she began the method, which temporarily misled many military writers as to the depletion of her resources in men, of drawing in advance the coming-on classes of future years and incorporating them. By these means she put in the west a number of assaulting divisions which could be called on in emergency, and a number of corps in training, with which, stiffened with better material and very strongly supported by artillery, she could reckon on holding a defensive front. In a sense Germany was gambling on this defensive system; but the event proved her right. She owed much of her ability in defence to an equally sound appreciation of the use of machine-gun tactics. In the recital of the British attempts to force a portion of the German line, the occurrence of the holding up of an advance by some small or isolated group of German defences, always abundantly supplied with machine-guns, has been noted. These occurrences were typical of the defensive warfare along the whole of the German line whenever it was attacked either by British or French. The preliminary bombardment might erase wide stretches of defences, but if any were left unswept, they formed themselves at once into nuclei of resistance which counterbalanced, or rendered useless, the advance over neighbouring sectors.

The sole antidote was to outgun the Germans, and so to overwhelm the defences that no yard of them should go unsearched before the infantry was sent forward to the attack. This was perceived, if all

the implications were not understood, in France, where the preparations went on steadily throughout the winter, and where Joffre's nibbling policy was pursued without impatience, and without any modification other than that of strengthening the line or attempting to improve it in places. Despite the German defeat on the Marne, and their repulse in Flanders, the Germans had a line well suited to take the offensive. Dixmude was theirs, and so was the eastern edge of the ridge that was the key to the position north of the Lys. The heights at La Bassée, and those from Notre Dame de Lorette, north-west of Lens to Arras; other heights from the south of Arras, east of Albert, to the Somme; and both banks of the upper Somme were held by them. De Castelnau was in no very good position between the Somme and the Oise; and since the Battle of the Aisne the French had made little progress on the north bank of that river from Compiègne to Berry-au-Bac. From Berry-au-Bac the whole line of the Aisne eastward was German, and south of it nearly all Champagne north of the Rheims-St. Menehoud-Verdun railway. Behind this area a good railway served them; in front of it only the entrenchd army of Langle-de-Cary, connecting with that of Sarrail defending Verdun, barred an advance. The southern Argonne and Verdun were well held and fortified; and the only other danger-point was at St. Mihiel. Beyond that the defences in the hands of General Dubail were sound. The vulnerable points in the French line were therefore along the north-western part, which could be divided into three sectors, from Le Bassée to Arras, from Arras to the Somme, and from the Somme to the junction of the Aisne and the Oise at Compiègne. In the first of these the French Higher Command aimed at driving the Germans from the edge of the plain of the Scheldt, and, having recovered Lens, to cut off the La Bassée salient with the help of the British and retake Lille.

The Germans were established on the difficult plateau between the Lys and the Scarpe. On the northern edge of the plateau in the commanding ridge of Notre Dame de Lorette, running west and east and south of the ridge, are the townlets of Souchez, Carency, La Targette. From Carency to La Targette were the "White Works" entrenchments, continued southwards and eastwards in "The Labyrinth". This region was in 1915 the field of some of the bloodiest fighting of the war. The plateau could be turned from the north, if the French could penetrate between it and the La Bassée ridges, and attempts were made, through December to February, north, west, and south of the plateau by General de Maud'huy, and subsequently by his successor, General d'Urbal, to find the chink in the German armour. From Arras to the Somme a number of minor combats had taken place in the same period. In the plain between the Somme and the Oise, De Castelnau had steadily improved the defences in the early part of the year. Next in section, Compiègne to Berry-au-Bac, affairs had not gone so profitably for the French, and the army of Maunoury at its centre, in the neighbourhood of Soissons, suffered a serious reverse in January.

Since September, 1914, Maunoury and Franchet d'Esperey had been endeavouring to detach the Germans from the formidable positions they occupied on the heights of the Aisne between Soissons and Berry-au-Bac, and on 8th and 9th January an attack was made on two important spurs near the villages of Cuffies and Crouy. The French troops entrenched north of the river maintained their supplies chiefly by bridges over the Aisne at Missy and Venizel, opposite Bucy. The attack was delivered in torrential rain, which swelled the river and carried away the bridges. Von Kluck, in command of the German troops, seized his opportunity, and counter-attacked the comparatively weak French forces north of the river with troops amounting to more than an army corps. On the morning of 12th January masses of men were sent forward to overwhelm the French right above Crouy and their holding on one of the spurs. The French endeavoured to cover their retreat across the river by a renewed attack on the other spur. But the manœuvre was too desperate to be more than a temporary expedient, and Maunoury's task in withdrawing



*Drawn by A. Forestier*

SPRAYING LIQUID FIRE WITH A "FLAMMENWERFER"

One of the dreadful weapons of destruction used by the Germans

his troops by the one bridge left standing, at Venizel, became a very difficult one. On the night of the 14th the retreat from the whole of the River Crouy to Missy, adjacent to Soissons, except for a bridge-head at St. Paul, was effected; but the reverse, which cost the French 5000 casualties, was not to be denied. The Germans were said by the French to have lost a greater number of men in effecting their purpose.

From Berry-au-Bac to Rheims neither side made any progress, and the attempt of the Germans to advance from the Moronvilliers *massif* down the valley of the Suippe was held in check by Franchet d'Esperey and Foch. The Germans had to content themselves with the senseless and unmilitary bombardment of Rheims and its cathedral. The damage to the cathedral was considerable, because of the vulnerability and fragility of this great example of the best period of French Gothic; and nothing could have been more exasperating to French sensibility.

It was, nevertheless, in the country between Rheims and Verdun that the greatest activity was shown during the winter and the early spring, because here the French line was most exposed to an attack in mass; and Generals Langle de Cary and Sarrail were entrusted with the task of preparing the way for a French advance which would deprive the Germans of suitable jumping-off places. General Langle de Cary's aim was to reach, or put out of action, the Bazancourt-Grand Pré railway which ran parallel to and behind the German front, crossing the Argonne forest and terminating at Apremont north of Varennes. Opposite to Langle de Cary was von Einem, with an army of about the same size. The chief advance by the French was towards Perthes, and Prunay. Farther east, in the Argonne, the French had eventually taken up a position facing the German trenches from Venne-le-Château to Melzicourt, finally extending their front along the western border of the forest. Their lines ultimately faced the western and eastern entrances into the Argonne; and the warfare of trenches in the forest fighting, excessively complicated, left these positions more or less stabilized. From the eastern edge of the Argonne, south of Varennes, in the region of Vauquois, the line of General Sarrail's defences curved north and north-eastwards across the Meuse towards the defences of Verdun, the perimeter of which the French steadily bent themselves to enlarge. General Sarrail's dispositions were such that at the beginning of 1915 the point of the German lines nearest to Verdun, into which no shell had been thrown, were the twin hills of Orne—two conical heights where the heavy German guns were subsequently installed, about 10 miles from the town, and 4 miles from Douaumont Fort.

In the German advance the French fortified lines from Verdun to Toul had been pierced at St. Mihiel, but Sarrail, with two cavalry corps, had confined them just in time to the salient Les-Eparges-St. Mihiel-Bois-le-Prêtre. The Germans, however, had secured a considerable stretch of the heights of the Meuse from Les Eparges to St. Mihiel. In January, 1915, the French fiercely attacked the German holding and secured most of the Bois-le-Prêtre, which is just north and west of Pont-à-Mousson on the Moselle. From Pont-à-Mousson the French line went east of Nancy, which was out of reach of German artillery, and in the winter advanced within a few miles of St. Donon, the culminating peak of the northern Vosges. The operations in the Vosges also went in favour of the French, though a fierce struggle continued almost day by day for the peak north of Cernay named the Hartmannsweilerkopf. The summit, several times taken and retaken, was in French hands after a severe fight by the Chasseurs-Alpins on 24th March, 1915.

The most sanguinary fighting in the early part of the year took place on the western side of the St. Mihiel salient for the Meuse heights of Les Eparges on the eastern side of the river. The line of hills, of which Les Eparges was the buttress, formed the northern defences of the position behind St. Mihiel. By February 17th the French had sapped towards the German positions and, blowing up their trenches, rushed the first two lines. On 18th February there was a Bavarian counter-attack and a furious bombardment

to follow. Not till the 22nd could the French claim any success. Another attempt was made a week later, and the net results of the fighting appeared to be a slight gain of ground by the French, with severe losses on both sides. Similar fighting, with not dissimilar results, took place west of Verdun, and in the Argonne, during these months.

It was west of the Argonne, between the Aisne and the Suippe, that the most important of the French battles in the early part of 1915 were fought. Von Einem's forces, deployed west and south of the Argonne to Berry-au-Bac, were a continuous threat to Joffre's whole western position. It was, moreover, becoming evident that in pursuance of the theory of co-operative action on all fronts the Allies in the west must pay back their debt to the Ally in the east by detaining as many German troops as they could. Accordingly, General Langle de Cary began a series of attacks on General von Einem in the region of Perthes, at very much the same time that Great Britain, also at Russia's instance, took the first steps towards the Dardanelles Expedition.

During December, 1914, the French had bored their way forward on the line Perthes-le Mesnil-Massiges; and in the following January there had been the customary interchange of yards of trenches in this area. On 16th February a new French attack began, which, in its initial stage, captured two miles of trenches north of Beauséjour. This fighting, though never developing into a battle, and always remaining local in character, went on with intermissions till 12th March—nearly a month. Such success as was gained was indubitably French, and in terms of territory represented an advance of 1½ miles over a 4-mile front. Tactically the French position was improved; strategically four to five German army corps had been detained, and though it is not likely that their detention greatly affected the German plans on the Russian front, this species of offensive-defensive warfare was, in fact, the only strategy possible in 1915 to the Allies.

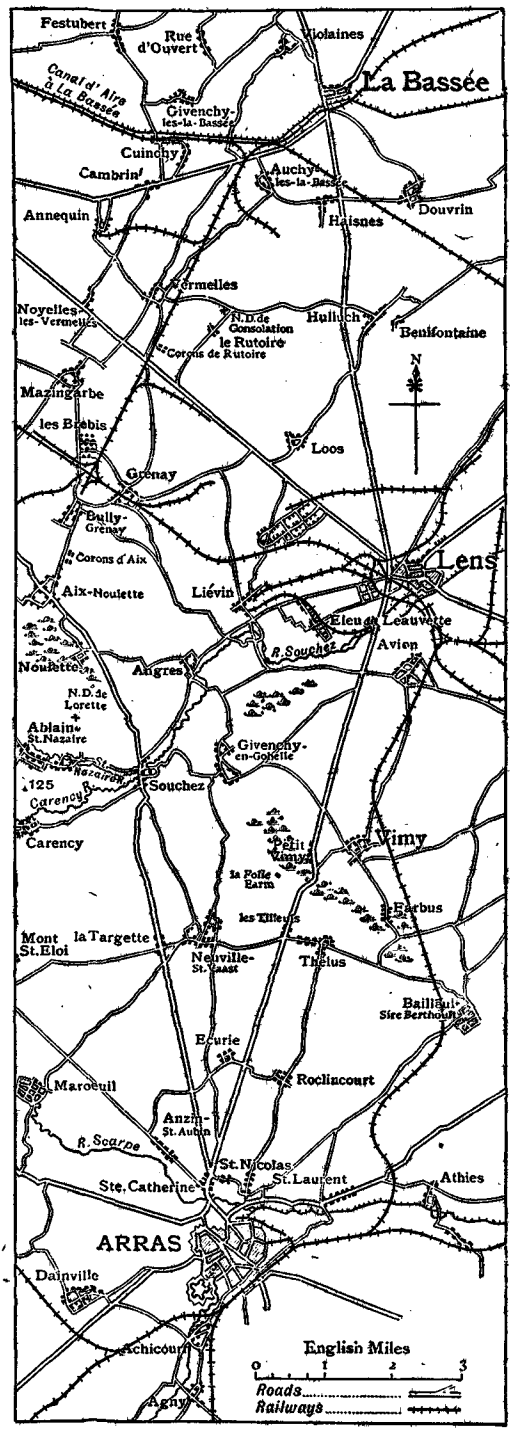
The battle of Perthes was said, in 1915, to have helped the British to win Neuve Chapelle; though it would be truer to say that the French persistency in attack all along their line kept the Germans from ever developing any opportunity presented to them of counter-attacking either British or French disastrously. But in 1915 it was not fully realized by either of the Allies that a successful break of the German lines was an improbability. They believed (as Sir John French hoped) that Lens, and with it the plain between the Scarpe, Scheldt, and Lys, might be won. The preliminary steps to its recovery were the seizure of the plateau between Notre Dame de Lorette and Vimy, and the piercing of the German line between the heights of Notre Dame de Lorette and of La Bassée. The Germans were not blind to the French designs, and during February and March counter-attack followed attack in this sector. It was not till 23rd March that the French had obtained a command of the Notre Dame de Lorette Ridge, and even then the command was disputed. At the end of this narrative of events on the French front during the prolonged winter of 1914–15 the French line was in an excellent state of defence, and, provided that the men and gun-power were forthcoming, was not ill placed for attack. But it should have been evident that the high cost at which every small advance had been won made a large success precarious.

An illustration was furnished, before the Allied attack in Artois opened, by the cost of the last attack on Les Eparges, which, beginning on 5th April, lasted five days before the great spur, dominating the Woëvre, was irrevocably in French hands. The Germans had to cede this strong point, but their machine-gunners were chained to their weapons, a fact which, however interpreted, was a token of the enemy's resistance. The capture of Les Eparges seemed to presage a further attempt to squeeze out the St. Mihiel salient, and possibly to pave the way to a blow on the German left in Lorraine and Alsace. If such a policy was ever entertained by the French General Staff it was abandoned by the beginning of May, when the campaign of Artois became the chief preoccupation of General Joffre.

At the beginning of May the German lines in the Lille-La Bassée-Arras triangle formed a sharp salient. They extended east of

Loos, across the Lens-Béthune road, east of Aix-Noulette, and reached the Lorette plateau, well to the west of the highest spur crowned by the chapel. They covered Ablain, which was the extreme point of the salient, and Carency. They then curved sharply back east of the Bois de Berthenval, covering La Targette and the road from Arras to Béthune. Here were the White Works, and the village of Écurie was also made part of the German lines, which were here drawn to protect Lens. During the first week of May the French Tenth Army, under General d'Urbal, with General Foch in superintendence, was brought up in strength to 7 corps, and its artillery was increased to 1100 guns—in those days an unprecedented accumulation. It was necessary, and in fact less than adequate to its purpose, for the German intricate system of trenches was so linked by the small machine-gunned forts that pulverization of any great length of them was almost impracticable. The French bombardment began on 9th May, and in the course of a few hours had spent more than a quarter of a million shells. About ten o'clock the infantry advanced on to the field of their artillery preparation, and took what remained of the road junction of La Targette. East of it, in the hollow below the Vimy heights, lies Neuville St. Vaast, the church of which had been converted into a fortress. The French had to fight through the village house by house. Farther north the centre of d'Urbal's attack swept over the White Works and beyond the road from Béthune to Arras. The right and centre had gone on for more than 2 miles. But, as so often happened, another part of the line, the left, was held up. At Carency the endless ravines and hollows had all to be fought for: and, though the day brought 3000 prisoners and 10 guns, the battle was only beginning.

On the next two days the French carried all the entrenchments across the Loos-Béthune road. They attacked the chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette, and carried the greater part of Carency and most of what was left of Neuville St. Vaast, between the




Map to illustrate the French Effort west of Lens, March–May, 1915

White Works and the Labyrinth entrenchments. On the 12th, after a most desperate struggle, the chapel fell to them; Ablain and the remnants of Germans in Carency surrendered. The whole of the high ground west of Souchez, with the exception of a few fortified posts, was in French hands. It had been a tremendous feat; and, if war was merely a theory, a great triumph, for the German line appeared to be pierced. It was, in fact, not pierced, because in it were a number of untaken fortified posts, which as effectually prevented a wave of advance pouring onward as a number of stones on a lawn would impede the progress of a lawn-mower: the Sugar Refinery at Souchez, the cemetery at Ablain, a road on one of the Lorette spurs, the eastern outskirts of Neuville St. Vaast, and especially the Labyrinth between that village and Ecurie. All these places were studded with machine-gun nests manned by brave and skilful gunners: and the battle was resolved into a number of small actions against them. On 21st May the road on the Lorette Spur fell, but Ablain cemetery held out for eight days longer; and the Souchez refinery changed hands several times before the French made certain of it on the last day of the month.

With that episode the Battle of Artois came to an end. It had flattened out the German salient, and left Lens with only its own defences. But, despite its capture of important positions, as well as some 5000 to 6000 prisoners, it had left the general situation unchanged, and the Germans little worse for the encounter. The German losses in this battle, as in that of Festubert, where the British subsidiary attack had taken place, had been severe; but so had those of the Allies, and, after those battles, as before them, the Germans retained the superiority in the decisive factor of such forms of warfare, namely high-explosive shells. The French artillery had shown what could be done with an adequate artillery preparation, but " adequate " preparation was not enough. For results it must be overwhelming, and, as the war went on, successive engagements showed that it must be seconded by superiority in numbers. In 1915 the Allies on the Western Front did not possess the requisite superiority in either of these factors, and the German line, fortified in the new manner by machine-gun strongholds, scientifically placed, sufficed always to slow down an assault on it till reinforcements could be gathered for counter-attack.

During the summer the front remained undisturbed by any large movements, though it was never quiescent, and the strain of local attacks, offensive and defensive, was continuous and exacting. How trying the strain was is known to the British people, but, as Sir Douglas Haig acknowledged four years later, in his speech at the presentation of the freedom of the City of London to Marshal Foch, the greater part of the strain by far fell on the French, who at all times and in all seasons saw their man-power draining away. Great Britain was preparing, and despite all urgency could not prepare faster than a given rate either in men or shells. In shells, in 1915, the French output was far larger than the British, and the lessons of Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, and Artois, had enforced the necessity of laying up the highest possible accumulation for an offensive. There was some reason for continuing this process of accumulation—of the British resources as well as of the French—through 1915 and beyond it; but the Russian collapse on the Galician and Polish fronts had rendered delay a double-edged weapon, seeing that in the following spring Germany might be freer to handle the Western front, and could scarcely be weaker than in the autumn of 1915. General Joffre, in pursuance of the military doctrine of striking an enemy when he is exhausted by his own efforts, therefore determined on a blow on a large scale in late September. Before the date of the assault, attacks at many points of the front had been made to confuse the enemy's judgment as to the exact point at which the heaviest blow would fall; and in various sectors, such as those of the Souchez district in Artois, Arras, the Aisne, in Champagne east of Rheims, in front of the Moronvillers position, in the Argonne, and the Woëvre, the bombardment was intensified.

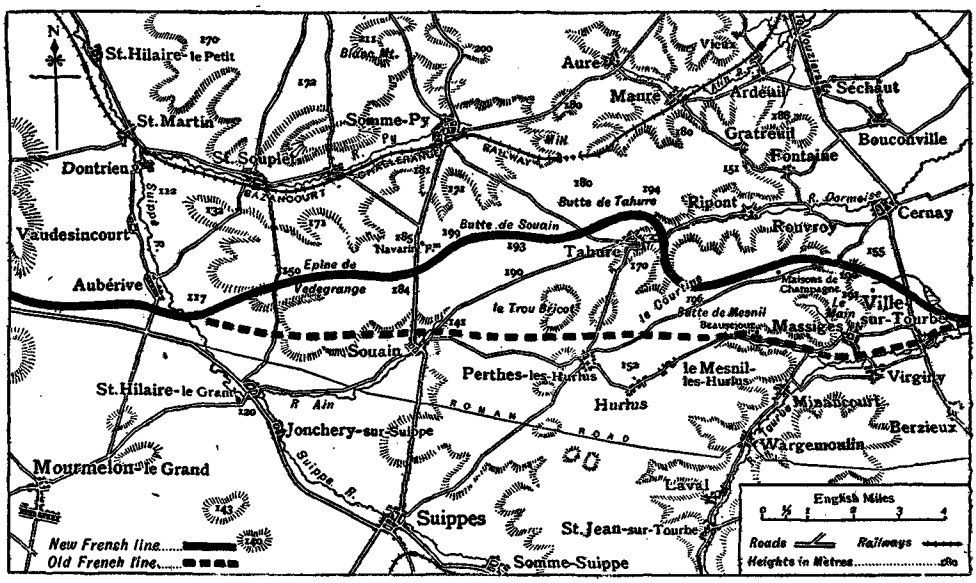
The sector of assault actually selected was

that which marked the French centre in Champagne, from Auberive, on the River Suippe, through Souain and Perthes to Massiges, a 16-mile front in a rolling country of chalk downs and slow streams. The governing idea of making the attack on a wide front was a sound one, for any break through over a narrow front could never be rapid enough to enable the troops effecting it to turn round and roll up the enemy flank. Mackensen's successful drive in Galicia had been made on a 30- to 40-mile front; the third zone, with the Souain Ridge, Heights 195 and 201, and the Tahure Ridge.

North of Mesnil was the fourth zone, strongly protected by two hills to the west and the Mesnil Ridge to the east, and artificially strengthened between these buttresses.

The fifth zone, north of Beauséjour, opened up fairly easy country which rose to the Maisons de Champagne Farm.

Beyond it was the zone of Massiges, where the heights of 191 and 199, together called




The French Advance in Champagne: map showing approximately the old and new lines at the end of September, 1915

difficulties in the way of the French were incomparably greater, but they believed that their artillery concentration and skill would surmount them. The German front attacked was by no means uniform in character, and it was divided by the French Staff into six zones for assault.

The first zone extended from Auberive eastwards to Ville sur Tourbe, over a 5-mile ridge, bisected by the road from St. Hilare (south) to St. Souplet. The fortifications of d'Epine de Vedegrange were on this road.

The hollow of Souain was the next zone, with a road from the village through the strong point of Navarin Farm on the hill to Somme-Py (north).

North of Perthes was the valley of the Main de Massiges, formed the strongest buttress of the whole sector. Every yard of the six zones had been fortified, and entrenched, and machine-gunned to the highest known point of effectiveness. It was nowhere a single, double, or treble line of trenches merely, but a double line of *main positions*, a very different thing. The second main position lay 2 to 2½ miles behind the first; and the first-line defences were extremely dense, consisting of a network some quarter of a mile in depth of entrenchments, sometimes of five trenches in parallel lines, with large fields of barbed-wire entanglements placed in between. The 2 miles separating the first main positions from the one in support behind it had been criss-

crossed with communications and tunnels and studded with the new-fashioned *fortins*, or machine-gun forts and emplacements—becoming later the concrete pill boxes.

The antidotes to this elaboration of defences were the high-explosive shell and aircraft observation. The Germans had begun the war with a great preponderance of aeroplanes, mostly of one type. The French and British were rapidly catching up in numbers, and were evolving tactics suited to fighting, observation, and bombing-machines. These aided in some degree the concealment of French intentions by keeping German aeroplanes at a distance, but in a greater degree, by observation, charted out the German system of trenches, artillery positions, and supply centres, and thus assisted directly and indirectly the work of the French gunners. The regular and purposeful bombardment of the Champagne front began in the middle of August. The long-range guns selected as particular targets stretches of the Challerange-Bazancourt rail way which fed the German lines. On a number of days the bombardment was extremely heavy, and on 22nd September, fine weather helping the aeroplanes in their task of spotting targets, the bombardment mounted to a storm and continued till the morning of the 25th. It is a point worthy of observation that during these three days no private communications were permitted between the army zone and the interior of France, so determined were the French Staff that the secret of their intention should not leak out.

The first results of the French attack, as the infantry swept over their parapets on a 25-kilometre front, was a justification of the preparatory method. The first-line German trenches were unable to offer resistance, and by noon, "practically along the whole front", these positions were occupied by French infantry. But practically all was not quite all. The wave of infantry had here and there flowed up against or round strong points which offered continued resistance, and which, besides inflicting heavy losses on the attackers, made a connected and continuous advance beyond them impracticable. Meanwhile, in the enforced pause, the German artillery, though too late to stop the advance, had now targets of known ranges on which to operate. So that, instead of resembling a wave which, having broken through a barrier, submerges the surrounding country, the French advance became in its second stage impeded by a series of small irregular dams. The first of these dams was encountered in the Auberive zone, where the road ran over the ridge through Epine de Vedegrange to Souplet. The German line was here indented with bays and salients like a fortress, so that inside a bay the attackers were machine-gunned from three sides; and to the machine-gunning was added the accurate artillery fire from the big gun positions farther west on the Moronvillers heights. Nevertheless, the French dash carried these bays and pierced the labyrinth of trenches behind. Here they made progress, but it was slow progress, though heroically rapid in proportion to the difficulties to be overcome. It was fastest on the right of the road, where the difficulties seemed greatest. The vigorous defence of Auberive, a German bastion, could not have been unforeseen by the French.

Farther east, in the Souain zone, where the German defences were not so finished, the French advance was more remarkable. There had been a great deal of dangerous and delicate preparatory work to reduce the first onset to a rush of about a furlong, which is as much as men can do in face of machine-gun fire. The French assault radiated from Souain like three spokes of a wheel, the left spoke pointing towards two wooded hills, the middle one along the road to Somme-Py, and the right on the road to Tahure. The attacks along the first two spokes was at once effective, and especially along the Somme-Py road, where in three-quarters of an hour the French were almost up to Navarin Farm. The advance along the right-hand, easterly spoke was held up by machine-guns which had escaped destruction in the Bois Sabot.

Between Souain and Perthes the fighting was extremely interesting and very successful. Between the Bois Sabot and Hill 200, west of Perthes, the German defences, very difficult, intricate, and well organized, were known as the "Pocket", and the core of

them was in Bricot Hollow to the north. East of Bricot Hollow the country was easy, and the defences were slighter. The main French blow was aimed at these slenderer defences, while the "Pocket" was strongly engaged. The effect was to surge past the "Pocket", envelop it and reduce it, the main attack meanwhile sweeping on northwards and eastwards. The same process went on in the woods to the east of the Perthes-Souain-Tahure roads. Here the attack was admirably successful, and despite the growing difficulties of the advance, the end of the day found the French here digging themselves in on the slopes of Hill 193 and the Tahure ridge.

Next in order to this was something which approached a check. In the Mesnil zone the advance was slow, difficult, and costly. Next to this again success attended the effort, for almost in one dash the attack broke through two woods and some troops reached the crest of the Maisons de Champagne. Here, indeed, for a few flattering hours there were hopes that the cavalry might get through. Last of all, and farther east, the bastion of the Main de Massiges seemed on the point of collapse, for French Colonial troops got right on to the plateau, only to be held up by machine-gun fire. Such is the summary of the day's operations, which sent back 12,000 prisoners to the French cages. The greatest depth of penetration was 2½ miles; and though the two German wings had stubbornly held, the centre had been pushed well in.

No counter-attack developed during the night, and the French brought up reinforcements and moved their heavy guns forward to renew the attack on the 27th. The best commentary on the fighting which took place on that day, and on those following, is contained in the French *communiqué* of 28th September. "In Champagne the struggle continues without intermission." In other words, splendid as the French effort was and, in face of the difficulties, continued to be, yet these difficulties did not disappear, but multiplied. For example, on the western wing the attack had been stayed at the wood on the road from St. Hilaire to Souplet, and at the Vedegrange Trench. These were both carried on the 27th, but farther progress was stayed by a deep area of uncut wire which fenced another series of parallel trenches of the second line of defence, the parallels of the Bois Chevron. On the day after that it was recognized that an entirely new effort must be organized to carry these works. The gain here had been considerable and included 44 guns, but it could not be enlarged without disproportionate cost. Similarly, in the Souain sector, it was not till 28th September that along the whole line the French got into contact with the second German positions. In the course of doing so they enveloped the Bois Sabot and captured the remnants of the machine-gun organization which had held them up.

In front of Perthes the same tale of hand-to-hand fighting in order to purchase further advance has to be told, and when the French arrived at the German line extending from the Souain Ridge to the Tahure Ridge, belts of undestroyed wire confronted them on the reverse slopes. There was nothing to be done except dig in, and the devoted *poilus* went on building up a system of counter-defence here under the enemy's guns for eight days. So also in the Mesnil zone. Six days were occupied in capturing the northern tip of the Mesnil Ridge, and in encircling the Trapèze Redoubt to the south of it. Hardest of all was the task on the Main de Massiges, with the three hills divided by narrow ravines, as if three fingers of a hand pointing south-west were outspread. There could be no advance between these threatening fingers: the French could but strike at the plateau behind them and then work their way down by bombing parties through the many-veined tunnels and trenches. The struggle went on for days. The numbers of prisoners and guns mounted. By September General Joffre was able to announce that his number of prisoners taken was over 23,000 and the guns 79. But the terms in which the victory was announced also marked its limitations:

"The Germans", ran two successive *communiqués*, "have not only been forced to abandon on an extensive front positions which were strongly entrenched, upon which they had orders to resist to the end; they have sustained losses, the total of which in killed, wounded, and prisoners exceeds

the strength of three army corps . . . . (1st October). In Champagne we gained a footing at several points in the German second position west of the Butte de Tahure and west of the Navarin Farm. At the latter point certain of our troops crossed the German line and advanced determinedly beyond it, but their progress could not be maintained owing to a barrage of artillery fire and very violent flanking bombardments."

The right interpretation of these summaries soon became plain. The German line had received a very severe testing; the French had won a tactical victory which reflected the highest credit on their Staff work, their artillery, their company and battalion leading, and the fighting spirit of their infantry. But the German line had never parted; it had been entered, but never pierced. The German Staff work appears to have been bad, and their intelligence department defective, for though they had an inkling of the ordeal in store for them, they had not sufficient force on the spot, and their reinforcements were brought up in a very ragged manner. At the beginning of September they had seventy battalions in line on the Champagne front, and supplemented these by twenty-nine more before 25th September, so that they had about 115,000 involved in the battle. Before the middle of October nearly all these had been withdrawn and twenty-three fresh battalions had been brought up. There seems no doubt that the losses of the Germans were a good deal the heavier during the first two days of the battle. If, however, the German incapacity in the extremely testing circumstances proved very expensive in losses of men, their strategic grasp of the situation had been little shaken, and their judgment, even in the face of a reverse, had not been found wanting. The French had, indeed, demonstrated that, given sufficient gun ammunition, a way could be paved for infantry through the most complicated defences; but the Champagne battle had, in this sense, been no more than a demonstration. The accurate preliminaries had enabled the artillery to smash up the first line, but when the infantry reached the German second line they became aware, for the first time, of the formidable range of defences here awaiting them. On the reverse slopes of the hills, running parallel to the Challerange-Bazancourt railway, and therefore shut off from direct observation, were the main second-line defences. These were of a character which continually developed during the war, and at this time consisted of dense sunken fields of barbed wire, pits filled with wire, and behind them a whole system of siege defences with machine-gun bastions, forts, and redoubts supporting one another. Tunnels were dug to communicate with trenches on the nearer slopes of the hill.

In short the French encountered in Champagne the genesis of the Hindenburg line, of which the foundations were laid next year—a monument of German ingenuity and industry. Several years had to elapse before a means of breaking a Hindenburg line were found; the means consisting of an overwhelming preponderance of guns, and a capacity on the part of leadership to mass the attack and reinforce it when and where it was most wanted. In Champagne the French struck a resounding blow, but it was unaccompanied by a sufficient number of blows struck elsewhere, and they had not the men to spare to cut through at overwhelming cost. Consequently, the Germans were able to patch up the rent, and the feat of rolling up the edges which Mackensen had accomplished against the Russians was impossible. The same lesson, with the parts reversed, was to be repeated when the Germans attacked Verdun in the next year.

General von Falkenhayn, who was Chief of Staff in the Western area at this period, remarks of the French effort in Champagne that it failed, as all attempts to break through failed, when the *moral* of the opposed side was sound. In his memoirs von Falkenhayn says that the French attacked on the first day with 17 divisions, and so disorganized and damaged the front of the German Third Army that its Head-quarters Staff considered the advisability of further withdrawal along the whole front. This was prevented, in fact, by the intervention of General von Knobelsdorf, Chief of Staff of the neighbouring German Fifth Army; and Great Head-quarters confirmed his advice subsequently. Von Falkenhayn adds that in all General Joffre sent in 35 divisions and

RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KISSING AN IKON BEFORE GOING INTO BATTLE

used 2000 heavy and 3000 light guns. Von Falkenhayn, however, appears to exaggerate the discrepancy between the two opposed armies.

## CHAPTER VII

### ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT: WINTER AND SPRING, 1914–15

The Russian front, extending from the Baltic to the Bukovina, could not remain static after the violent shocks which it had sustained or administered in East Prussia and the line of the Niemen; in Poland and on the line of the Vistula, and in Galicia and the line of the Carpathians. For a long time after the counter-balancing events of the eviction of the Prussians from East Prussia, and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian armies in Galicia and South Poland, the scales swayed violently at each end of the Eastern front. On 24th September, 1914, for example, the Russians invested Przemysl; on 26th September and two days later the Battle of the Niemen was being fought by the forces of Hindenburg and Ruzsky. For a period the balance at both ends dipped in favour of the Russians, who advanced rapidly towards the Carpathian passes, occupying the broad and most westerly Dukla Pass, and sending a cavalry raid into Hungary in the last days of September, while on 1st October they began that nine days' battle of Augustovo in which General Rennenkampf's left wing drove the Germans back through the forest, going in at one side of it and leaving as many German soldiers dead there in the tangled fighting as escaped at the other side.

Hindenburg withdrew with losses which dimmed the prestige of his Tannenberg victory, and in spite of reinforcements retired to the shelter of prepared positions in the Masurian Lake region, thus abandoning the attempt to relieve the pressure on the Austrians in the south by action in the north. Instead he was appointed to command in the centre of the line, where a fresh attack on Warsaw might divert the Russians from any attempt to press on to Cracow. An advance on Cracow was the core of Russian strategical aims, because it was the most militant way of carrying the war into German territory. The occupation of Galicia and the holding of the Carpathian passes were accessory before the fact, both because it was necessary to clear the Russian left before an advance could be made, and because the possession of the Carpathian passes by the Russians must carry with it a menace to Hungary. Hungary was a granary, and supplied horses. Galicia held the oil-wells which were of such value for motor transport.

Before considering the Russian campaign in the Carpathians, the new tactics of Hindenburg[1] claim attention. The Russians could not be diverted in the most northerly sector; a blow at Warsaw would certainly compel attention. It might, if successful, give the German armies comfortable winter quarters, and a first-rate base for operations in the spring. For the attainment of this object Hindenburg obtained considerable forces: the 5th, 6th, and 17th Corps, the bulk of the reserves from the abortive Niemen campaign, including the East Prussian 20th Corps, as well as Saxon and Bavarian troops and Landwehr from the home reserves. On his right he had a stiffened Austrian army under General Dankl. In one way or another Hindenburg's centre from Thorn to Czestochowo numbered some 700,000 men, and the Austrian army in Cracow, the forces shut up in Przemysl and acting along the Carpathians, probably brought up the whole number of the Central Powers' forces on the Eastern front to somewhere above 2,000,000 men. The Russian armies at that time in the field were much smaller than they were said by popular rumour to be.

[1] It is to be remembered that though Hindenburg was the commander on the Eastern Front, General Ludendorff was the Chief of Staff, responsible for the strategy of the campaign.

They were probably outnumbered. They were certainly undergunned.

Hindenburg's plan of campaign was that of a parallel advance. The Austrians were to advance from Cracow on to the line of the San River, so as to compel the Russians to fall behind that tributary of the Vistula, and so raise the siege of Przemysl. In the north there was a flank movement up the Vistula from the fortress of Thorn by means of the river and the Thorn-Lowicz railway. The centre advanced by the two main lines, Kalisz - Lodz - Lowicz, and Czestochowo-Skierniewice, for the direct assault on Warsaw. Hindenburg's intention was to make his right centre the principal arm, and by a vigorous thrust, which was to be supported by Dankl's Austrian army, to force the Vistula at Josefov, where the river was narrow and the Russian communications weakest. The Russian railway communications were everywhere extremely bad, while those of their enemies were not merely good but strategically designed. At Josefov the disparity was greatest.

If this plan had succeeded, the German Generalissimo could have cut the main line from Warsaw to Kiev at Lublin, and at once have brought about the disruption of the two wings of the Russian line. It failed because the Russian General Staff perceived the danger and withdrew all the Russian forces in good time behind the Vistula and the San. Ivanoff's army of Galicia conformed to the general movement: a field army was put into position to defend Warsaw, and the Vistula bridge-head at Ivangorod, higher up, was strongly held.

On 10th October Hindenburg's centre was at Lodz; and after a slow and deliberate advance of five days the Germans joined battle along the Vistula line. The critical assault of 5 army corps on the Warsaw defences began on Friday 15th and lasted till the 19th, and the brunt of the blow fell on the Siberian army corps, which had but just arrived from Moscow. That was the first surprise for the attackers: the second was that the Russians were supported by Japanese heavy artillery. For the first day the battle hung in the balance: the second and third days saw the Russians consolidated in entrenched positions beyond the western Warsaw defences. On the fourth day the Germans were kept busy with a counter-attack. A Russian force crossed the Vistula under cover of the guns of Novo Georgievsk (north-west of Warsaw), and struck so hard at the German left centre as to force it back from the Vistula into an east-and-west position. The battle thenceforward reduced itself into two fights.

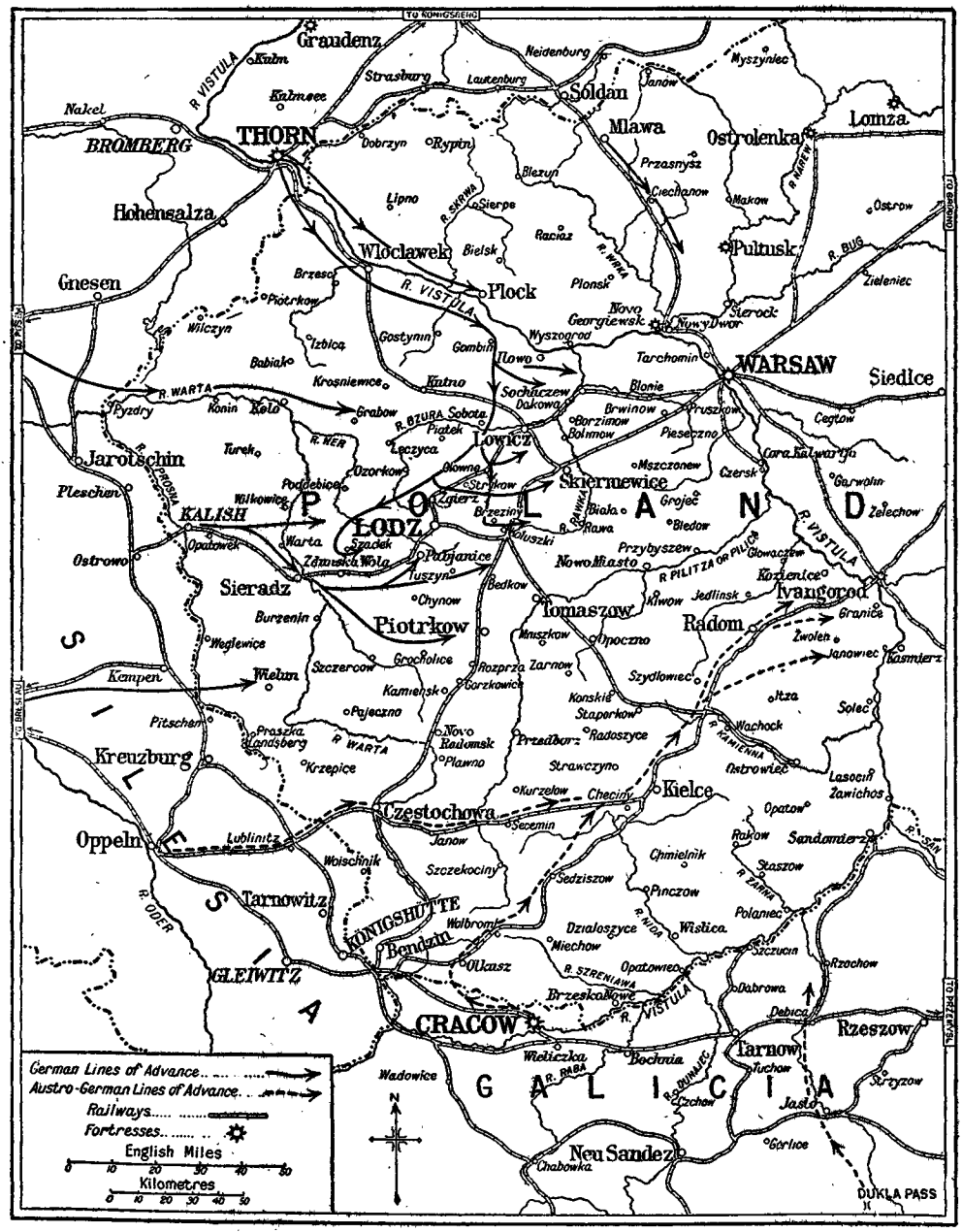
The attempt to cross the Vistula higher up (at Josefov) had been simultaneously and vigorously pushed. A feint attack between Warsaw and Ivangorod had been blown to pieces by Russian artillery. The main attack at the Josefov narrows met with another kind of disaster. The Germans crossed in pontoons to a bank apparently ill defended. But after they had crossed General Ruzsky fell on the force while it was still in difficult country 8 miles south of Nova Alexandriev and cut it to pieces (21st October). Next day the Russians themselves crossed the river at Nova Alexandriev, and, extending along the banks, began the southern half of a new battle, the Battle of the Pilitza tributary. It was a soldiers' battle, fought hand-to-hand in the spruce woods near Glovaczov. It is said that 16,000 men, Germans and Russians, were buried here. General Ruzsky, with his forces over the river, threw every man and every gun at the enemy, and drove the Germans to Radom (25th), and subsequently to Kielce (3rd November), where prisoners and guns were taken. The German thrust south of the Pilitza had been a complete failure, and Ruzsky's victory here determined the success of the Russian counter-attack (under Rennenkampf) north of Warsaw. With both flanks turned Hindenburg's left and centre were compelled to retreat, and the Russians took in succession Skierniewice, Lowicz, and Lodz.

The solitary success, a short-lived one, of the first advance on Warsaw was obtained by the Austrian armies under the Archduke Josef and General Woyrsch, which, linking up with Dankl's army on the Nida, crossed the San in face of General Radko Dimitrieff's outnumbered Russians, captured Jaroslav and relieved Przemysl before they

were forced to retreat once more by the falling back of the Germans. As Hindenburg fell back he left a desert behind him, a procedure which was subsequently imitated by the Russians at the expense of the unfortunate country of Poland, where the operations took place. There was foresight as well as method in Hindenburg's destruction, which was a preparation in advance for another blow at the Russians from the north, a blow which could be aimed with greater security if no counter-attack were possible through West Poland.

Moreover, as happened at a later date, and on a smaller scale, in the Bapaume-Péronne area in the West, the Hindenburg temporary retreat disorganized the Russian plans, which still aimed at reaching Cracow before winter set in. The Grand-Duke Nicholas, in supreme command, conceived the idea of striking with his own central forces at the German army which had been beaten, south of the Pilitza, and of trying to hem it in between General Ivanoff and General Dimitrieff, while with his left wing he pursued the Cracow adventure. Hindenburg's northern army was meanwhile retreating safely behind its own frontiers and preparing a counter-stroke. For its purpose Hindenburg and Ludendorff had received new reserves, including 2 corps from von Francois' East Prussian forces. Despite the German losses, the force under Hindenburg for a second blow at Warsaw was a strong one, numbering perhaps 750,000 men. This army was preparing to strike a counter-blow on a comparatively narrow front, the 40 miles between the Warta and the Vistula, while the Grand-Duke Nicholas was still maturing his scheme for the advance to Cracow; and the German Head-quarters Staff, which included von Mackensen, calculated that their blow could be got in before the Russian offensive could mature. As a matter of consecutive occurrence the Russian attack did mature, and the advance towards Cracow was set in motion by the Grand-Duke. It failed, but its failure was due not to the German counter-stroke but to the resistance offered by the Austro-Hungarian armies. The two movements, the Russian attack in the south, and the German attack in the north, can broadly be said to have reacted on one another, though naturally, had the Russians been faced with but one task, they could have pressed forward with more than their usual contempt of losses.

Hindenburg's second attack on Warsaw from the north may be disposed of first. The Russians became aware of it on 13th November, when a strong force brought up by rail from Thorn began to press Ruzsky, who could expect no help from Ivanoff, Ivanoff being 80 miles south in front of the German southern army. Ruzsky contracted his front and awaited the attack on a line from Gombin, on the Vistula, to Uniejov, on the Warta. The attack, pressed by von Mackensen, drove the Russians steadily back, exacting prisoners and guns, while Ruzsky strove to fall back on the defensive line of the Bzura. The Bzura offered a strong line of defences, the river fringed with marshes with only one good passage, between Kutnow and Piontek, but it could be turned from the south, where the Russian left rested on no obstacle, and where it could not be reinforced in time by troops sent up by General Ivanoff. In order to keep Ivanoff's hands full, the German army facing him was ordered to attack again. Then, while lesser flanking efforts were made on the Upper and Lower Bzura, von Mackensen's weight was flung against the crossing at Piontek. The Russians at first resisted but weight told, and on 19th November the resistance gave way, and for four days German troops were rushed over the crossing. The Russian line fell back, and farther back, till there was a deep bulge in it east of Lodz and south of Strykov. Mackensen burst through the bulge on the 23rd, and Ruzsky's army was split into two halves, the northern half with a wing on the Bzura at Lowicz, and bending at a right angle through Strykov and Brzesany; the other in another right angle facing it, with Lodz inside the corner of the angle. It was a most perilous position for the Russians, for whose further discomfiture German troops were every hour hurrying up. But the breakage had been on a narrow front, and at the supreme moment Russian-Siberian reinforcements came up, as well as




The Polish Campaign: map illustrating the struggle for Warsaw, October–December, 1914

first aid from Ivanoff. These new forces, flung into the battle, cut off the apex of the German wedge (24th November), and the situation was reversed. It was now the two German corps, which had thrust into the balloon-shaped salient, which were in peril. Ruzsky strove with all his might to tie up the neck of the balloon, and from south and north every Russian that could be gathered was sent there to do it, and Rennenkampf was dispatched from the north. He arrived 24 hours too late—one of those incidents

which, had they fallen out differently, might have determined a campaign, or even a war.

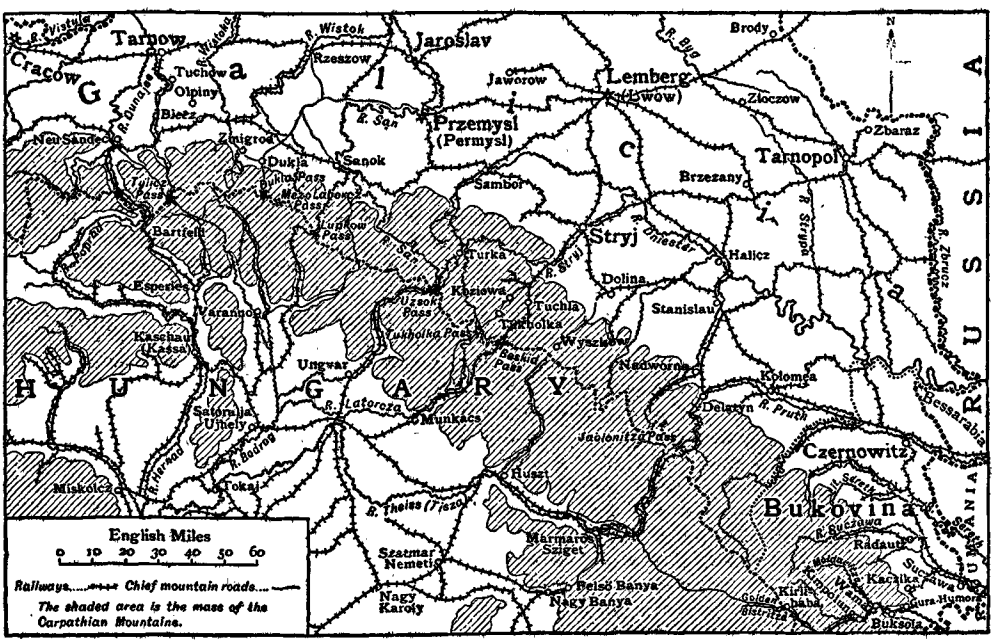
Yet, in view of the recuperative power which every belligerent showed, the belief is an illusion. The Germans extracted themselves from the salient, not without great loss—"our losses", admitted a German *communiqué* "were naturally not light". Mackensen's only course was to hold the neck of the salient with fresh troops, while those inside forced their way out. The process occupied three days, and then—an apt commentary on the recuperative powers of armies—Hindenburg endeavoured to pluck victory from defeat by sending von Mackensen against the Lodz-Lowicz front again, while with his right wing he endeavoured to envelop the Russian left towards Petrikov. The Russian Commander-in-Chief responded by a shortening of his front and an evacuation of Lodz; a necessary as well as prudent step, for the Russians had lost heavily in the fighting. Hindenburg's second counter was to renew his blows on the Russian right wing, which was north of the Bzura and well east of Lowicz; at the same time he set in motion his forces from East Prussia, which advanced on a 16-mile front from Mlawa in an attempt to reach the railway line from Warsaw to Petrograd.

This second force was held up by a Russian advance to meet it from Novo Georgievsk. But the thrust against the northern Bzura army was more effective. The Russian front was awkwardly posed astride the Bzura, and again the Grand-Duke Nicholas saw that the only safe form of resistance lay in "refusing" the left wing. The weather, which was unusually mild and sodden, and rendered the country a chaos of bog and mud, helped him in his decision. He got behind the Rawka, the tributary of the Bzura, at the same time retiring his left, till his line ran from the Vistula, behind the Bzura, through Skierniewice and Rawa to Inovolodz and Opoczno. Against this line the battle lasted nearly three weeks, from 7th to 24th December. The fiercest German attacks were between the 19th and Christmas Eve, against Sochazew on the Bzura and Bolimov on the Rawka. They failed, and the Blonie positions, the conventional defences of Warsaw, were not reached. This achievement in repelling the German attacks must always rank high in Russian history, and the subsequent disasters which overtook the Russian armies should not be permitted to obliterate the courage and great sacrifice by which it was achieved.

It was the more remarkable because it was contemporaneous with the Russian effort to reach Cracow. From the 12th of November, when Russian cavalry reached Miechow, north of Cracow, the forces of Radko Dimitrieff (under Ivanoff) went steadily forward till they were on the Raba, and cavalry scouts in the outer suburbs of Cracow at Wielitza (5th December). General Brussiloff had meanwhile cleared his left by occupying in turn the Uzsok, Lupkow, and Dukla passes of the Carpathians. It was now clear, however, both to Germans and Austrians, that some positive measures must be taken to stem this advance, and 2 armies were set in motion against General Ivanoff. One of the Austro-Hungarian corps, with German divisions added, struck at his left from the western Carpathians; the other, striking at the Carpathian passes, were of 2 Austrian corps with Hungarian divisions. At the same time a force was advancing against Ivanoff's right from Czestochowa. The clash came on 8th December, when Radko Dimitrieff was forced to withdraw after fighting a successful engagement in front of Cracow, because his right was engaged, and his left rear threatened. Four days later disaster happened. The Dukla Pass was lost (12th December). Dimitrieff's position became at once untenable, for the Dukla is the easiest and best of all the Carpathian passes. He at once fell back, till his right was behind the River Nida, east of the lower Dunajec (or Donajetz) and thence by Jaslo to south-east of Krosno. Even there the retreat was not at an end, for the Austrians retook the Lupkow and Uzsok Pass in turn. For a time it seemed as if Przemysl might again be relieved. But by 20th December the Russian retreat had reached its limits, and Ivanoff turned on the advancing Austrians. He drove them from the eastern bank of the Nida across the lower

Dunajec and the Biala, and the Russian left once again seized the foot of the Dukla Pass. Some 10,000 Austrians were cut off, and by Christmas Day Brussiloff was again in possession of the Galician exits to the Lupkow and Uzsok Passes.

The struggle for the Carpathian passes was long maintained, and the *communiqués* issued in 1915 gave very little idea of what was really going on there; for while on the Przemysl fell, and seemed in its falling to be an augury of the highest success. That success never came, and it can now be perceived that in striving to compass it Russia was exhausting herself to a point which rendered her incapable of resistance when the final German blow, so many times resisted, came armed with all that weight of artillery which then and thereafter was to prove in more than one theatre the determin-




The Campaign in the Carpathians

one hand a Russian cavalry raid was sometimes interpreted as an advance in force, the results of a Russian check were represented by Austro-Hungarian bulletins as Russian disasters.

The Carpathians rise in height and difficulty from west to east. The chief passes are the Dukla, broad and low, the Lupkow, the Uszok (railway), the Mezo Laborcz, the Beskid, the Tucholka (or Voreczke), the Wyzkow, the Wisloka, the Delatyn or Jablonitza, the Borgo, and the Kirlibaba. The Russians carried on a struggle in the centrally situated of these passes during the first five months of 1915, and did so while their northern armies were fighting Hindenburg. While their effort was in progress ing factor between equal forces, especially when surprise was coupled with it.

It will, perhaps, be more convenient to consider the Carpathian campaign as a whole, than to attempt to co-ordinate it in point of time with the northern campaign. During January and February Russia did not hold the passes in a military sense; that is to say Brussiloff's troops could not use them for an advance into the plains south of them. Rather were they employed in resisting the Austro-Hungarian attempt to win a way back through them in order to relieve Przemysl. While the struggle was in progress the extreme Russian left moved through the Bukovina, which, with Czernowitz, had been in Russian hands since the victory of

Lemberg. On the 17th of January they took the Kirlibaba Pass, which leads to Marmaros Sziget, in Hungary. This was not a serious advance (the Borgo Pass was not attempted), but rather a quasi-political manœuvre designed as an invitation to Roumania. It became necessary to the Central Powers to neutralize this invitation, or this threat, and Austria-Hungary received a new stiffening, both politically and from a military standpoint. Count Tisza, the Hungarian Premier, was enabled to put one of his nominees, Count Burian, into the position of Foreign Minister, and Tisza became the power behind the armies. He demanded German assistance, and got it. Three new Austrian armies were formed under the nominal command of the Archduke Eugene. In the Carpathian section, from the Dukla to the Uszok, was the army of General Boehm-Ermolli to relieve Przemysl: from the Uszok to the Wyzskow was the German General von Linsingen, with a German staff and some German divisions: from the Wyzskow to the Bukovina was General von Pflanzer-Baltin's army, also with German troops.

This machine began to operate in the last week of January. It worked very badly at the Lupkow and the Dukla, where Dimitrieff was of a good deal of assistance to Brussiloff by holding up the Austrians at the Vistula; east of the Lupkow, however, the passes fell before von Linsingen, whose forces poured through the Beskid (railway), the Tucholka, and Wyzskow, and advanced towards Lemberg and Stryj through the Galician plain. Farther east still von Pflanzer-Baltin had no difficulty in crossing the range through the passes leading to Stanislau and Kolomea, and his extreme right easily dispossessed the Russians of the Kirlibaba.

Here, however, the strategy of the campaign seems to have blundered. The two points selected for goals of the attack may be designated as Stryj, in the centre, which led to the upper valley of the Dniester and Przemysl, and Stanislau, on the east. The German-Austrian effort concentrated on Stryj and the relief of Przemysl, instead of on crushing the Russians farther east. In spite of this concentration it failed before the difficulties of the Carpathian foot-hills. Von Linsingen came into Galicia though the Tucholka and the Beskid (railway). Before the roads from them can meet in Galicia, the ridge of Koziowa intervenes. At Koziowa, during February and March, the troops of Brussiloff and von Linsingen fought a battle which was bloody and costly indeed, but which saved Stryj and Lemberg, and gave reinforcements time to come up to help the hard-pressed Russian left wing.

The Russians could not be dislodged from Koziowa. While Koziowa was held, and while Russian resistance could not be beaten down at the Uzsok, Lupkow and Dukla Passes, the Austro-Hungarians had no room for deployment in the Dniester valley, and could not co-operate with their advance farther eastwards. This advance made better progress, for, moving from the Bukovina and through the Jablonitza Pass, it converged on Czernowitz and engulfed Kolomea; and at the beginning of March took the important railway junction of Stanislau. But on 3rd March the Russians, who had been fighting delaying actions, were reinforced; Stanislau was recaptured, and the Austrians were pushed back towards Kolomea.

By 21st March the Austrian offensive had been stayed, in the sense that it had neither reached Lemberg nor relieved Przemysl; and on 22nd March Przemysl, after an investment of seven months, surrendered to the Russians. It had remained so long inviolate because General Selivanoff, who invested it, had only 100,000 men, and no siege-guns with which to reduce it. It was far too heavily garrisoned for its importance, some 150,000 men, including many cavalry, having been packed into it. General von Kusmanek, who commanded, seems to have been content to regard it as good winter quarters, escape from which could easily be arranged in the spring, and he neglected the opportunity to abandon the trap when he had the opportunity in late October. One more chance was given to him in the middle of December, when General Ivanoff was falling back from Cracow, but it was dissipated in an abortive sortie which cost 3000 men (15th December), and after that only one further attempt was made. On 13th March the Russians began in earnest to

attack the defences, and carried the north-east segment. Four days later a sortie on a large scale was attempted by the best troops available, including a Hungarian division. It was ill-directed, and moved right up to a Russian artillery position, with the result that many were killed, and 4000 prisoners left in Russian hands. Four days later, on Monday, 22nd March, the Austrian commander blew up his ammunition, his guns, and the bridges over the River San; and having done the work of destruction very thoroughly General von Kusmanek surrendered the town and garrison at nine o'clock in the morning. Some 120,000 prisoners, of whom 2600 were officers, and 1000 guns, were the prize of capture. A good many of the guns were useless, and much ammunition had been destroyed. The chief value of the surrender to Russia was that it removed a complication, and freed General Selivanoff's investing force.

In the northern sector of the opposed armies the winter of the early year had similarly been occupied by warfare that, according to ordinary calculations, the conditions should have barred. But Germany knew quite well of the growing shortage of the ammunition of the Russians, and trusted that, whatever attrition of men and resources was incurred by herself, would be reproduced on a greater scale on the Russian side, and with more exhausting results. During the month of January, except for the raid in Bukovina, and another one in the extreme northern wing towards Tilsit, the Russian forces attempted no active offensive, and the Germans opposite Warsaw seemed content to relapse into trench warfare, which their resources in guns, gas, and other modern ingenuities enabled them to make more harassing to the Russians than themselves. On 1st February, however, von Hindenburg abandoned these tactics for a frontal attack on the Russian positions on the Bzura and Rawka. The preliminary artillery bombardment embraced the whole front of the Rawka (south) from Skierniewice, through Bolimov to the confluence with the Bzura, and along the Bzura to Sochaczev, but the spearhead of the attack was made on the 7 divisions on a front of 7 miles in front of Bolimov, the centre. The thrust was well provided, and heavily pressed from 2nd to 4th February, and at its highest pressure looked like succeeding.

It had advanced 5 miles towards Warsaw. But it had been made at a point where the Russians had road and rail by which to reinforce, and the Russian counter-attack of the 4th February broke it up. This was the last of the frontal attacks on Warsaw, and was a costly failure. It was replaced by the strategy of the attack on the flanks. That on the southern flank was entrusted to the Austro-Hungarian forces, and has been described in preceding pages. That on the northern flank was, in the first place, a German reaction to the Russian raid towards Tilsit and East Prussia, which had been made by a force, under General Baron Sievers, of 4 corps (Tenth Russian Army). East Prussia at that time was weakly garrisoned, and by 6th February the Russians were close on Tilsit, and held a long straggling line from there behind Insterburg and Lotzen to Johannisburg.

On 7th February Hindenburg had ready for it one of his railway surprises, and directed against it 2 armies, comprising 9 corps under Generals Eichorn (northern army, Insterburg to Lotzen) and General von Bülow (Lotzen to Johannisburg). The Russians were compelled to retire as best they could, the northern half experiencing the greater difficulty, and one of its corps (20th, General Bulgakov) splitting up in the forests north of Suwalki. The southern wing of 2 corps had to face an attack by double their numbers, and they fought a series of very fierce rear-guard actions, of which the severest was in front of Lyck. When the rear-guards were driven back from these positions, however, the bulk of the troops had got away. Von Eichorn's army occupied Mariampol, in Russia, on the 12th February; von Bülow was not on Russian soil till the 15th, and was then moving towards Grodno and Ossowiecz. By that time, however, the Russians, who had suffered severe, but not excessive, losses, considering the difficulty of their retreat, were behind the Niemen and Bobr lines, and prepared to counter-attack an enemy who had now left his railways behind.

Von Eichorn could do little on the extreme left, and though, concentrating under the cover of forest, he got a body of the 21st Corps across the Niemen, they were unable to advance to cut the railway. Another attack on Ossowiecz failed, as had the first, one month before, and by 5th March the siege had been raised, von Eichorn's troops had left their bridge-head on the Niemen, and the Russians were falling on them from behind as they retired through the forests. Meanwhile, Hindenburg had set in motion another and heavier attack, south of this on the Narew. It was a plan designed on familiar lines, and dependent for its success on breaking the Russian defences before their ill-constructed communications could bring up reinforcements. The Narew flows tortuously south-westwards through marshes and forests, with towns at its chief crossings till its confluence with the Bug. The Warsaw-Petrograd line is well south of it, and sends branches which join at Ostrolenka on the Narew. From Ostrolenka a road runs to Mlawa through Prasnysz, a junction of six roads in a region of low hills.

In the middle of February, 1915, the Russians had a brigade at Prasnysz; between it and the river a division; the direct forces on the Narew, under General Plehve, were weak. The Germans began their concentration at Mlawa to attack their line on the 18th; and began to advance on a 25-mile front on 22nd February. The Russian brigade at Prasnysz was overwhelmed; the Russian division between there and the river assailed on the 23rd. On the 24th what had happened before happened again. The division held out till reinforcements came up, and the reinforcements, ill-equipped as they were, drove the Germans back with bomb and bayonet. It is certain that at this time many Russian soldiers had not even rifles, and the battle of 24th February, which resulted in the recapture of Prasnysz on 26th February, is one of the many monuments to the wonderful fighting power of the Russian infantryman before his spirit was broken by mismanagement and intrigue. The Germans retired in good order, though they left 10,000 prisoners behind; and the failure on the Narew, added to that on the Niemen, ended the attempt to capture Warsaw from the north. The months of February and March, 1915, mark the highest level of Russian defensive achievement; but except themselves (and the Germans) few knew how exhausting these achievements had been, or how beggared it had left their resources.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RUSSIA AND THE GREAT GERMAN-AUSTRIAN OFFENSIVE OF 1915

The release of the Russian army which had been investing Przemysl placed 100,000 more men at the disposal of the Grand-Duke Nicholas, simplified transport, and removed certain anxieties. The men could be used to strengthen the Russians who were still holding back the Austrian right centre at Koziowa, or they could reinforce the efforts which were being made by Brussiloff to force the Uzsok and Lupkow Passes. Some were used in both these endeavours, and the eyes of all who watched the Eastern theatre of war were turned during March and April, 1915, to the struggle between the Russians and the Austro-Hungarians for the crests of the western Carpathians. Attack and counter-attack followed, and the struggle for the Uzsok Pass, which was especially severe, seemed to typify the climax of a struggle which in its issue held the future of the Hungarian plains. By the 22nd of April some seventy miles of the range had been captured by the Russians, together with 70,000 prisoners and 30 guns—rather a disproportion in numbers—and still the Austro-Hungarians held on. They did more: they counter-attacked on 25th April, on the Russian left from Koziowa to the Delatyn

Pass, and kept up the pressure here for a week.

To a superficial onlooker it seemed as if this were a last effort to take pressure from the other end of the Carpathians, and that the Austrian front was hard beset. Appearances were more than deceptive—they were deliberately contrived to deceive. The Austrians were merely fulfilling their part in the larger German plan, which, conceived by the able minds of the Great German General Staff,[1] aimed at keeping the Russians fully employed on the extremely difficult Carpathian enterprise while a blow was being prepared for them elsewhere. It seems to those who are wise after the event that this blow should have been anticipated by the Russian High Command, and that its whereabouts might have been approximately defined, since Germany would endeavour to make use of her strategic railways to impart to the blow its utmost effectiveness. Consequently a blow was to be expected somewhere on that awkward line of the Vistula from which Russian masses could with such difficulty deploy, yet which, because of its length, must somewhere be weakly held. But Germany's well-kept secret was by the nature of things hard to plumb, because none of her enemies in the spring of 1915 was aware of her real strength, or of her immense resources in material.

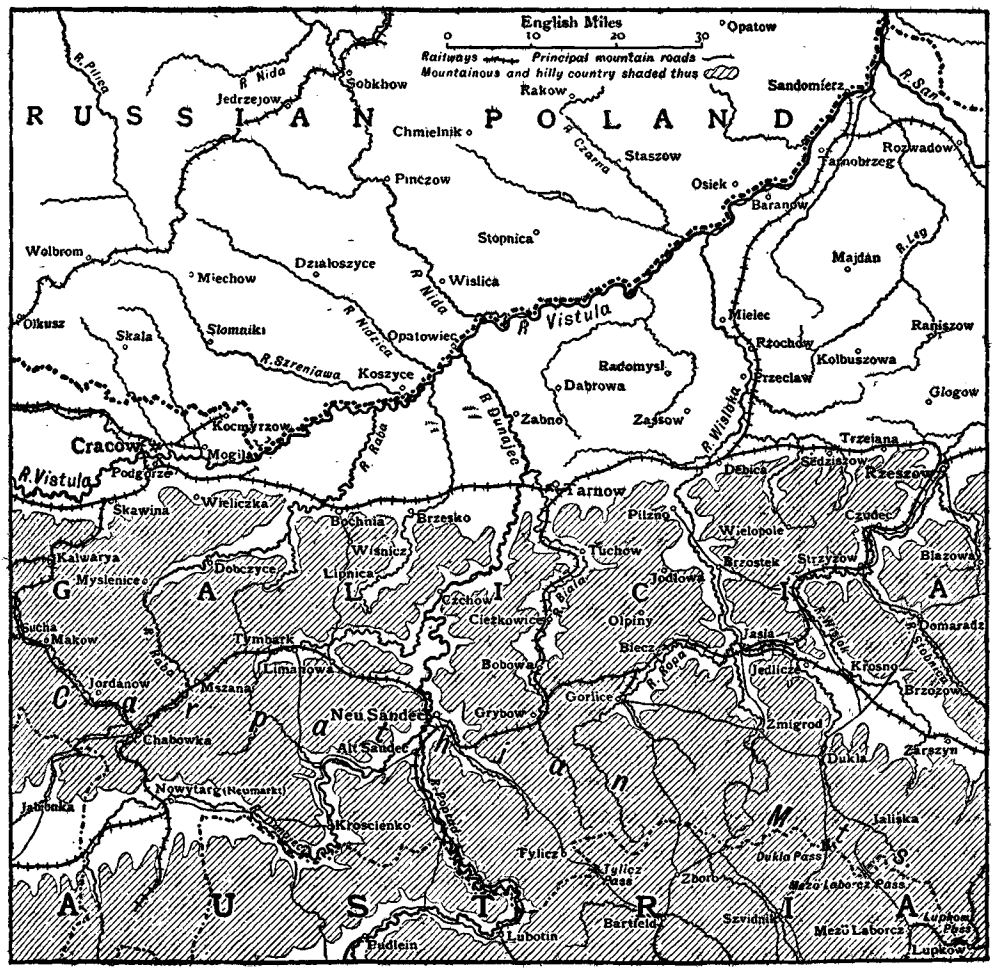
While the Allied publics were being fed to repletion with the fable that Germany, having expected a short war, could not possibly be prepared for a long one, Germany was crowding on a full head of steam in the effort to shorten the war in the only way possible, namely, by beating her enemies in the production of the machinery of war. While Great Britain was staggering painfully towards efficiency in the production of munitions, and was squabbling about "conscription", Germany was mobilizing every available man and woman, and was lighting every furnace in every factory that could turn out explosives or guns. Thus she was accumulating on the Western Front enough material to blow back the efforts (on an insufficient scale) to break through her fortified lines, while amassing secretly a battering-ram of material and men, such as she judged, and rightly judged, would be sufficient to smash an opening in the far-less-competently-fortified Russian lines. Germany in 1915 appreciated better than her adversaries the conditions which made a break-through possible, and was well informed as to the state of munition exhaustion of the Russians.

While von Falkenhayn was marshalling his resources, the intention was cloaked by one or two minor thrusts. Bavarian divisions were sent to help von Linsingen and towards the Bukovina, and, in response to a Russian raid on Memel, on the extreme north (17th March), an expedition from East Prussia crossed the Russian frontier and took Tauroggen (25th March). Meanwhile three quarters of Germany's winter output of shell was taken to Cracow and secretly carried up towards the Dunajec (Donajetz) lines, where Dimitrieff's Russian army believed itself securely entrenched. After it came the guns till more than a thousand of every calibre were placed in position; and after the guns, came the concentration of supplies and of men. Russia could not, and did not, remain entirely ignorant of these preparations; but the interpretation of them was faulty, and the impregnability of Dimitrieff's positions was overrated. They were not impregnable, because they were not deep enough to resist an overwhelming mass attack of artillery. The Russians had beaten off men; they could not beat off shells, especially when their own guns, and often their own rifles, were empty.

The Russian commands remained little altered during the spring, except that Ruzsky, really ill, handed over his northern command to Alexieff. In the southern group of armies, Evert had the army on the Nida, Dimitrieff that on the Donajetz and Biala, Brussiloff the Carpathian armies, and Lechitsky the extreme left towards Stanislau. Ivanoff was in command of the group, which was large in numbers, but poor in equipment. The German commands on the other hand underwent considerable rearrangement. Von Mackensen was placed in command of

[1] Von Falkenhayn was then Chief of Staff, and he indicates that the plan emanated from General Head-quarters rather than from Ludendorff.

the whole southern group, which comprised the armies, running east to west, of von Bothmer and von Pflanzer-Baltin (opposite Lechitsky), von Linsingen (at Koziowa), Boehm-Ermolli, von Bojna, and von Marwitz (all opposite Brussiloff), von Woyrsch Its heavy batteries numbered at least 1500 pieces. Von Falkenhayn says that heavier guns were employed there than hitherto used in the field, and that von Mackensen's striking force consisted of 9 German and 7 Austro-Hungarian divisions. It had to




The Galician Campaign: map showing Cracow in relation to Lemberg (continued on p. 74)

(Upper Vistula), the Archduke Josef Ferdinand and von Mackensen's phalanx opposite Dimitrieff. Von Mackensen's army, the strongest yet mustered under one general, was stiffened by what afterwards were known as shock troops or shock divisions—the cream of the fighting corps—but numerically it was very powerful, with artillery supports incomparably superior to those of the whole Russian southern front. help it the whole Austrian strength of something over a million adequately-equipped men; and the total force, from the Nida to to the Sereth, which was to strike, at Mackensen's impulse, the hardest blow Russia had yet sustained, was about 2,000,000 men. Russia could put into the field as many men to oppose it, but she could not arm them: they would have to fight their enemies with their fists.

On Wednesday, 28th of April, 1915, the machine was set in motion and began with an advance of von Mackensen's right on the upper Biala towards the Carpathians and Gorlice. It was a part skilfully chosen to mask the real import of the coming blow, for there had been minor attacks at this point before. Dimitrieff was not wholly blind to the impending attack; he was growing anxious, and had applied to the group commander, Ivanoff, for strong reinforcements. They did not arrive, owing to some blunder the true cause of which may some day be revealed, and Dimitrieff was left to play the part of a forlorn stand in a modern Thermopylæ. For two days the attack went on, forcing Dimitrieff to weaken his centre and right to hold his left together. Then, while he was still unsteadied by the feint attack, the real assault was launched on 1st May, with all the weight and impetus which von Mackensen could muster. The spear-point of the attack was directed towards Czekowice, midway between Tarnow and Gorlice. It was taken, and northwards hundreds of guns blew the Russian trenches out of existence. The German force in possession joined hands with that farther south and turned the whole of Dimitrieff's front. The next day there was no Russian front; the line of the Dunajec (Donajetz) and Biala had been pierced, the Russians could do no other than retreat hot-foot to the doubtful line of the Wisloka River, 20 miles eastwards, shedding guns, equipment, and prisoners. In the south, where the intricacies of retreat among the foot-hills were greater, the losses were most severe. The 48th Division hardly existed when its remnants cut their way out. General Korniloff was taken prisoner.

On the Wisloka—no guns, no prepared positions—the Russians made the stand of desperate men. Reinforcements had been hurried up, including a Caucasian corps, and these assailed the Germans while there was yet some equality between the combatants owing to the slower advance of the German artillery. They took prisoners, in spite of their own mortal losses, but as each day the German guns grew stronger and the artillery storm was renewed, the possibilities of a successful defence of so bad a line as the Wisloka grew smaller. The Russians clung to their improvised trenches for five days; and then the accumulating pressure of von Mackensen's phalanx pierced the line at the railway-crossing of Jaszlo (7th May). The Wisloka line was consequently in the same case as that of the Donajec had been, and with its loss the troops of Brussiloff at the Dukla Pass were in grave danger of being cut off. They had to fall back lest their communications should be severed, and their goal was the upper reaches of the next eastward river, the Wistok, a worse line of defence in the circumstances than the Wisloka.

By 8th May the Germans were at the Wistok, and were crossing it. The Russians' right, subjected to less pressure than the left, had preserved its steadiness, and Evert's army had fallen back from the Nida to the Czarna in good order, but the forcing of the Wistok had made a 30-mile gap in the Russian line, through which it seemed that Mackensen's forces might pour, and thereafter turn to roll up the edges to north and south.

Brussiloff's divisions in the western Carpathians stood the greatest risk from such a possibility. The Russians set about to avert it by throwing forward strong reinforcements from Sanok, on the Galician side of the Lupkow Pass, to dam the southern flood while Brussiloff extricated his men from the region between the Dukla and the Lupkow. This was effected with heavy losses on 9th and 10th May; and before the extrication was complete the whole Russian line began to fall back as quickly as possible to the line of the San River north of Przemysl, and thence over broken country south of Przemysl to the Koziowa position. As the line in its southern sector was thus retired it ripped away from the Carpathians those of its forces which had won the crests with such painful toil and sacrifice. In ten days the results of five months' fighting had been surrendered. By 14th May the new line had been taken up, and, in a sense, the great gap that Mackensen had rent had been repaired, though Dimitrieff, in his 85-mile retreat, had lost heavily, and numbers of Brussiloff's divisions had lost still more in cutting their way out.

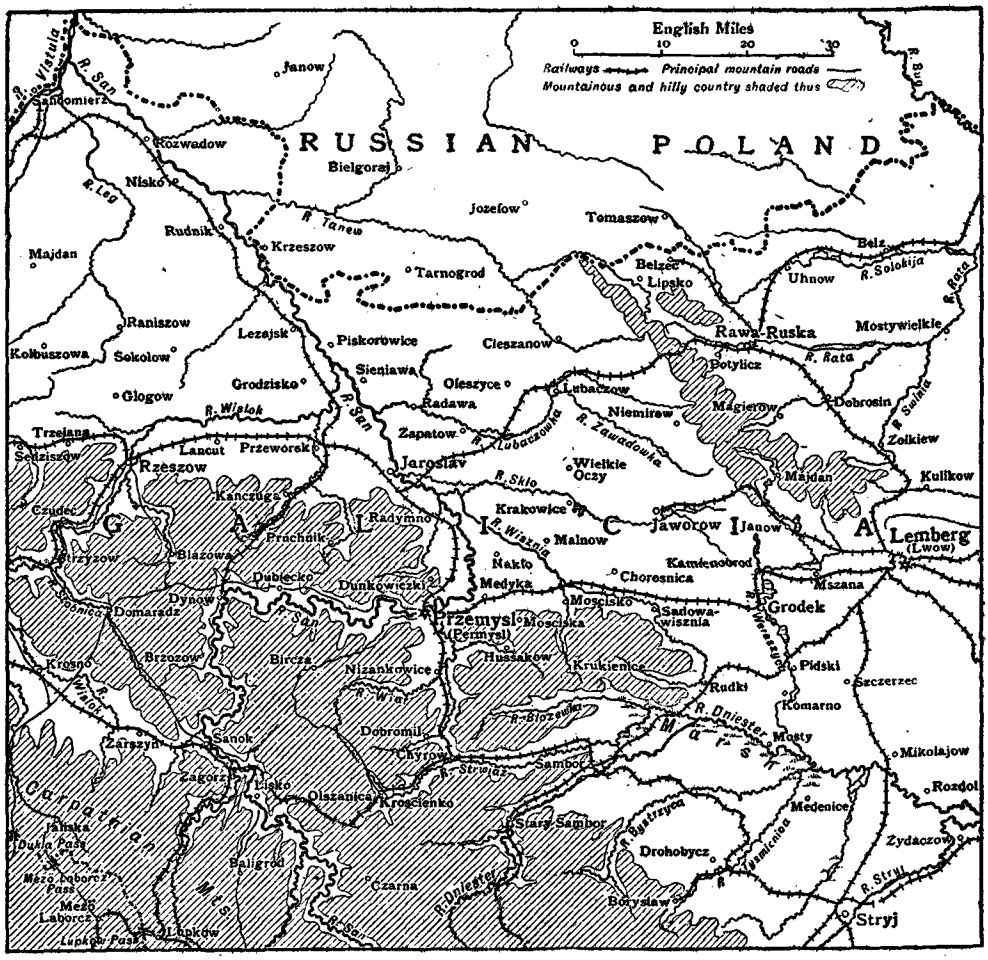
The measure of these losses in men and guns was in a material sense the measure of the immediate disaster, though its moral effect in changing so completely the relative attitudes of attacker and attacked could not be estimated in the same way. The Russian armies had now no prospect of re-assuming the offensive in 1915; it became clearer, as time went on, that all their efforts must be bent to fighting a defensive campaign. It is to the highest credit of the Russians' generalship that, perceiving the inevitable, they accepted it formidably. They retreated on a vast scale, and, rightly divining that the German campaign of 1915 must in all essentials of magnitude be an Eastern campaign, prepared themselves for vast territorial sacrifices, hoping to recoup themselves at the cost in men and material which the Germans would have to pay in advancing on their heels. The advance which Mackensen had made had been costly, in spite of its success.

The first concern of the Grand-Duke's group-commander, Ivanoff, was to hold Przemysl (which would certainly have to be abandoned) long enough to remove his guns and stores. His first tactical manœuvre was of the offensive-defensive kind. Evert's army had been falling back in good order on the right from the Nida to the Vistula, followed by von Woyrsch's Austro-Hungarian army with a few German divisions. Von Woyrsch assumed that Evert would not pause till the Vistula was reached. But, acting under Ivanoff's orders, Evert turned round in a sudden counter-attack (15th May), striking at both von Woyrsch's flanks while sending cavalry round on a wide detour to attack the Austrian communications. In a three days' battle von Woyrsch was severely handled, and fell back west of Iwaniska with 30,000 casualties, most of them inflicted by the Russian infantrymen. South of Evert the Russian troops on the San struck at the Archduke Josef Ferdinand's troops and pushed them back in a similar fashion, if on a smaller scale, to the Vistula. These two actions may be regarded as a counter-blow on the enemy's left flank. A similar blow was aimed far distant at the right flank, where, on the frontiers of the Bukovina, von Pflanzer-Baltin had pushed back Lechitsky. Between 9th and 15th May Lechitsky, striking hard back, cleared his opponent from the Dniester line, and was again threatening Kolomea and the oft-retaken Czernowitz. These blows, swift and remarkable as they were, could not alter the general strategy of the situation, for neither could be pushed far enough to divert the enemy from his purpose. They gained time. They did not affect the centre of gravity of the mass of action, which was on the San.

The Battle of the San began on 15th May. In the north the Archduke Josef Ferdinand's army held the positions from the Vistula to Jaroslav. The Russians held the left bank from Jaroslav to Sieniawa, and thence inclined westwards to the Vistula. From Jaroslav they held the line of the San (curving round Przemysl, which had been put in a state of defence, but was not intended to be held); and their Przemysl salient was continued through Dobromiel, Sambar, Drohobycz, to Stryj and the upper Dniester. The sector of this line principally selected by von Mackensen for attack was that between Jaroslav and Przemysl. The Austro-Hungarians under Boehm-Ermolli had descended from the abandoned western passes, and were attacking on the south the Russian line encircling Przemysl, with a view to holding the Russians there while von Marwitz, farther east, strove to cut the railway from that town to Lemberg. The nearest point at which von Marwitz aimed was Mosciska. Between von Marwitz (at Sambar), and the next group of Austrian forces, were the marshes of the Dniester. But von Linsingen, who headed these forces, had been able to take the Koziowa barrier as the Russians weakened, and was now moving on Stryj and the Dniester valley, while holding out a hand to the forces farthest east under von Pflanzer-Baltin at Halicz.

Before Mackensen's phalanx and its guns could come up to Jaroslav the Russians had left the defences of its low hills (16th May), which had been maintained only long enough to enable the rest of the Russian centre to get back over the San, and when this was ensured they sought to do no more than delay Josef Ferdinand's army. This army

took Sieniawa on the 18th, and the Russians in that sector fell back slowly, still fighting, to Lubaczowka. All this time there had been no frontal attack on the Russians still surrounding Przemysl. There was consequently no great urgency in the retreat here; composed. From the 20th of May onwards for ten days he held the southern side of the bottle-neck, against which von Marwitz could not lengthen the line of attack eastwards because of the Dniester marshes; and on the north he created a diversion by




The Galician Campaign: continuation to Lemberg of the map on p. 71

but a more dangerous situation had been created south of Przemysl, where Marwitz's advance towards the railway had been unexpectedly swift, and had dented in the salient till on the south-western side it was threatened with conversion into a bottle-neck, under the combined blows of Boehm-Ermolli and von Marwitz. General Ivanoff did not, however, allow himself to be dis- counter-attacking the Archduke, whom he drove out of Sieniawa again, and in places forced him to re-cross the river. Von Mackensen had come up, and his heavy attack had been successful in crossing the San at Radymno, which was very near Przemysl on the north, and the possession of which narrowed the bottle-neck on that side also.

But the weakening of the Archduke's army

on his left flank made his position awkward; and he could not press forward before Ivanoff allowed him. Ivanoff, however, had no intention of staying there beyond the time required for the removal of military material; and on 31st May the beginning of Przemysl's fall was signalized by the capture, by Bavarians, of the northern forts. On Wednesday morning (2nd June) von Mackensen re-entered the town, which yielded no captures of great profit, but the recovery of which was a symbol alike of Germany's military power and ability, and cemented anew the alliance between the Central Powers. In war, as in diplomacy or business, credit is of inestimable worth, and Przemysl signified alike to Austria-Hungary, to the Balkan nations, and to Turkey, that Germany's credit was, for the time being, secure.

Of more immediate tactical value was the capture by von Linsingen of Stryj (1st June). Stryj was a valuable railway centre, and its possession by the Germans foreshadowed the direction of the next blow in the campaign, which in tactics followed an undeviating plan —namely, heavy pressure on the centre by Mackensen's slowly moving but crushing artillery phalanx, with wide-flung attacks on the wings. Brussiloff lost men and guns at Stryj. Von Linsingen, making the most of his advantage, pressed on from Stryj to the Dniester at Zurawno, which is on firm ground free from marsh, and, in fact, the best river-crossing. On 7th June the passage was forced here, led by von Bothmer under von Linsingen's direction. The subordinate general captured the height to the north, and pressed on towards the railway to Tarnopol, reaching a point 40 miles from Lemberg. Here, however, his success was converted into a reverse. He had advanced too fast for his supplies, and Brussiloff, pausing in retreat, turned and rent him. The roads were bad, the Russians were used to them, and the German artillery was incapable of moving quickly over them. The sum of these factors was that von Bothmer, after a three-days' fight, was flung back over the Dniester with a loss of 15,000 prisoners. Yet such was the scale on which operations were being conducted in this theatre of war that this reverse was merely local, and, while it slowed down, did not dislocate the movement of the German steam-roller.

Farther east than von Bothmer, von Linsingen's right wing co-operated with von Pflanzer-Baltin in forcing Lechitsky's Russian army of the extreme left wing back over the frontier, securing Czernowitz, and taking Stanislau and its railways. More important than this was the renewal of pressure by the German central phalanx. Mackensen easily cleared his left flank towards Sieniawa, and then swung round his right powerfully towards Mosciska, on the railway, which was captured by von Marwitz on 14th June. The Russian centre was therefore obliged to fall back continuously, and was forced into a weak concave position between the lower San and the Dniester. Part of this position, in the direction of the Dniester and its marshes, was guarded by a good defensive line, the chain of the Grodek swamps, which, together, are some fifteen miles long, and lie between the Lemberg railway and the Dniester marshes. But these defences, almost impregnable to direct attack, could easily be turned from the north. Consequently, while von Mackensen sent Boehm-Ermolli to keep the Russians employed here, and directed von Pflanzer-Baltin and von Linsingen to continue to attack the Dniester crossings, he swung the bulk of the forces through the open country of Southern Poland from Sieniawa and Lubaczow, towards Rawa Russka. There was a fierce fight for this key to Lemberg on 20th June, but it was taken, together with Zolkiev.

A day before von Linsingen had secured a crossing of the Dniester at Nizniov. A new salient was being drawn round Lemberg and its fate was inevitably that of Przemysl. The Russians retired from the Grodek swamps, which were now merely a trap; Brussiloff withdrew his forces north of the Dniester, retaining only Halicz; and the Russian centre fell back east of Lemberg to a line between the upper waters of the Bug and that tributary of the Dniester, the Gnila Lipa, which had been stormed by the Russians in the autumn campaign of 1914. Lemberg was re-entered by Boehm-Ermolli on 22nd June. It was a far more valuable prize than Przemysl from any and every

point of view. Its possession controlled railways and roads; whoever held it held the key of Galicia.

On the longest day of the year (21st June), the Russian armies of the south were disposed in the following order and positions. General Evert's army was flanked by the Vistula at Radom, and extended thence to the confluence of the Vistula and the San. Thence the line ran along the San and turned south to the valley of the Bug, which it touched and left at Kamionka. Thence it went due south to the Gnila Lipa, and so to Halicz on the Dniester, and followed the river to the frontier. The Russians had suffered heavy losses—and had inflicted them—but Ivanoff's armies were still in being, and having been reinforced were still a dangerous barrier to any further exploitation of territory beyond the lines they held, more especially when the condition of Mackensen's forces and his ammunition, both weakened in the victorious progress, is regarded.

If Mackensen's thrust had been the whole of the German Eastern campaign, the Russian High Command might have deplored a set-back, but have congratulated themselves that their power of resilience was only impaired for a time, while the enemy's force had been largely spent. But Mackensen's recovery of Galicia, and his removal of the Russian *points d'appui* south of the Pripet marshes, was one-half only of the German plan, which rightly aimed at the reduction of the whole of the Russian armies to the point of inaction. The Russian army of the north was dependent on the railway from Petrograd through Vilna, Grodno, and Bielostock to Warsaw. The southern army was fed by the railway from Ivangorod through Lublin, Cholm, Kovel, and Rovno to Kiev. If either of these lines were cut Warsaw must be evacuated; if both were reached then both of the main Russian armies must fall so far back as to be severed by the Pripet. General Ivanoff was aware of the threat to his railway line, and never uncovered it. But Mackensen could still push the Russians back towards Lublin and Cholm, on the south side of the great salient round Warsaw, which was in June maintained by the Russian line; and at the same time another blow, by another group of German armies, might be struck north of Warsaw.

For the northern part of the design Hindenburg had von Below, with 7 army corps, in Courland at the extreme north; von Eichorn, with the Tenth Army of 5 corps, on the Niemen; von Gallwitz and von Scholtz on the Narew with 7 corps; and in Central Poland, linking up with the Archduke Josef Ferdinand, were armies under (nominally) Leopold of Bavaria and von Woyrsch. Reinforcements had been obtained by a few drafts from the Western Front, and by 4 new corps, mainly Prussians, and concentrated at Thorn. The Russians were quite open-eyed to the danger, and both knew and understood the concentration at Thorn. They reinforced, as they were well able to do, their armies with the men to meet the fresh open warfare for which Germany and her ally had marshalled more than 2,000,000 men; but they were unable to raise the ammunition which would have enabled the Russian numbers to resist the attack with ease. The Russian soldier and Russian territory would have to be expended in place of shell.

Before considering the movements which the German armies of the north undertook when their preparations reached the flash-point, the further progress of von Mackensen's forces may be considered. They abated their effort in no degree, except in so far as the need of waiting for supplies retarded it from time to time; and before they received the large aid of the northern movement they had been supported by an incessant pressure on the part of von Below and other armies of Hindenburg's command in the north. The armies of the Archduke Josef Ferdinand and Mackensen's phalanx swung away from the eastward march, the possibilities of which were exhausted, and turning acutely northwards moved on a broad front towards Lublin, Cholm, and Kovel—the southern face of the Warsaw salient. The Russians made no attempt to stop them, except by small rear-guard actions during June. The Archduke reached Krasnik, and Mackensen took Zamosc on 2nd July. But they were now

approaching the Russian defences of the railway running through Ivangorod, Lublin, Cholm, and Kovel; and the Russians, despite all their disabilities, were still capable of enforcing a price for further advance.

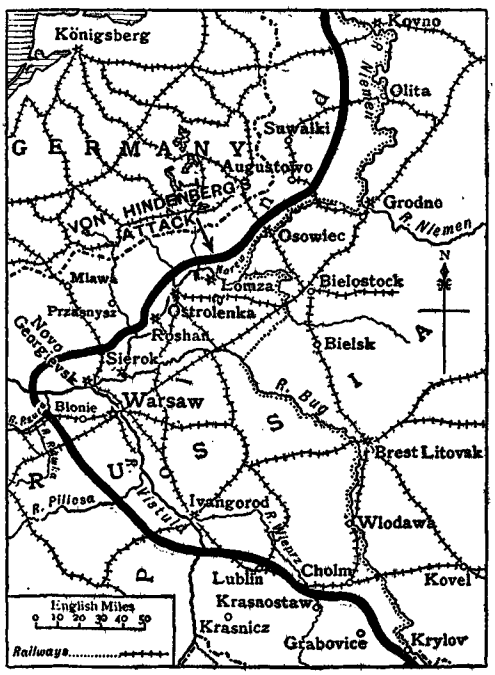
From Krasnik to Lublin runs a good road by the side of the Bistritza, and a little stream turns westwards from the village to the Vistula. The Russians first held this little stream against Josef Ferdinand, and when evicted fell back to a position on the Lublin road. At the same time they checked von Mackensen at a little distance north of Zamosc, where two rivers, the Wieprz and the Wolitza, formed an angle. The Germans had not got enough artillery up to blast a way through, and Mackensen had to wait till it came. But while he was strong enough to wait unmolested, Josef Ferdinand was not; and the Russians, seizing on the weaker commander, fiercely attacked him (5th July) at Krasnik. Mackensen, separated from his colleague by the valley of the Wieprz, could give no effective help, and after four days' fighting the Archduke was forced back 2 miles on an 18-mile front, and had lost 15,000 prisoners. It was a disargeeable check, but, like that which Brussiloff had inflicted on von Linsingen on the Dniester, it did not put the German plan out of gear. The Russian general on the Archduke's left, Evert, had pivoted back slowly like a door opening from west to east, as the Germans advanced, and just before the battle of Krasnik extended from Radom across the Vistula (north of Josefow) and covered the railway from Ivangorod to Lublin.

Beyond the armies of Josef Ferdinand and Mackensen to the east Boehm-Ermolli was moving north eastwards from Lemberg towards Brody and the frontier; von Linsingen, having crossed the Dniester, was manœuvring the Russians back from the Gnila Lipa River to the Zlota Lipa—no mean task, though he was aided by Pflanzer-Baltin. But by 10th July, when Brussiloff checked Boehm-Ermolli at Kamionka, on the Bug, the position on the south-east had reached a period of temporary stability. As much had been done on this front as could be done lucratively, and the hour was approaching for the new effort in the north. This was heralded on 6th July by a movement of von Eichorn's army of the Niemen, and by minor efforts on succeeding dates on the Bzura, on the Bobr, and in front of the little causeway fortress of Ossowiec, these culminating in big attacks on the Niemen front, in Courland, and at Prasnysz on the 14th, 15th–16th July.

The second battle of Prasnysz, in which General von Gallwitz brought up 5 corps to the attack, was the signal for the renewal of pressure by every German, and every Austro-Hungarian army from Courland to the Dniester. Von Gallwitz's attack was directed against the Narew line, which protects the Petrograd railway; and Gallwitz's striking force was linked up with one of von Scholtz's to the north, and with von Eichorn's army on the Niemen line. The Russians, forced out of Prasnysz (14th), made a good rear-guard stand on the 15th–17th in their second positions before falling back to the river. The Grand-Duke Nicholas, seeing well that the impending blows, of which that of von Gallwitz was probably the least serious, would strain all his resources, had prepared to husband them by reducing his commitments and shortening his line. There was but one logical outcome to this course, which must involve the flattening of the Warsaw salient and the abandonment of Warsaw. The first step towards doing so was that of relinquishing the Rawka and Bzura lines (18th), which had been adopted rather by force of circumstances than by design in the previous defence of Warsaw.

The northern plan had only begun to develop with the attack on the Narew. In the south, Mackensen's movements had been resumed on or about the same day. On 16th July, Josef Ferdinand returned to an attack on the Krasnik road; but this was subsidiary to Mackensen's push towards Cholm. He had patiently bridged the streams, brought up artillery on a broad front, and by weight of men and metal forced back the Russians under General Lesch, successor to Dimitrieff. By 18th July von Mackensen was within 10 miles of the railway. To the east of Mackensen, Boehm-Ermolli, answer-

ing to the general signal for activity, forced a crossing of the Bug at Sokal; but the real danger was not east, but west, of Mackensen, where von Woyrsch's army was now able to detach Evert's hold of the left bank of the Vistula. The advance of Josef Ferdinand and Mackensen on the one hand, and the abandonment of the Bzura lines on the other, made Evert's position untenable, and as he was compelled to fall back and abandon the




Map showing approximately the Salient about Warsaw created by Mackensen at Lublin and Cholm, and Hindenburg on the Narew

Vistula bridge-head at Novo Alexandriev (and subsequently cede Ivangorod) the army in front of Mackensen and his colleague began to be left in the air. In its turn it fell back, towards Lublin.

But though Ivangorod was lost by Evert, and Mackensen's group on its left wing was approaching nearer the southern railway, the more dangerous pressure was that which was being exerted in parallel thrusts north of Warsaw. On 20th July the Russians had mostly been thrown back by von Gallwitz's attack to the eastern bank of the Narew, and, though they held the bridge-heads on the western side, the river fortresses were crumpling up under the heavy guns. Diversions from Novo Georgievsk fell harmlessly on the German flank; von Gallwitz persisted in spite of them, and won on the 23rd two crossings over the river. He had to pay heavily for them, and could not secure a broad stretch of the Narew; nevertheless, an advance, shaped like an arrow-head, was made between Rozan and Pultusk, and its point extended to the Bug (25th July). Farther to the north than von Gallwitz, another threat, equally serious to the Petrograd railway line, had appeared in the advance of von Below's army. This advance had been begun on 14th July, when von Below crossed the Windawa, which runs into the Baltic at Windau above Libau, and swept towards Tukkum, half-way to Riga. Tukkum fell to his left wing on 20th July; and his centre began to move on Mitau, so that Riga seemed to be on the point of investment. Below von Below, another advance by Eichorn's left wing threatened the fortress of Kovno; if Kovno fell, the way would be open to Dvinsk and Vilna.

Such was the situation at the beginning of the last week in July, and to the world outside Russia it could not have looked blacker, though worse was to come. But already the evacuation of Warsaw had been resolved on, as a detestable necessity, by the Grand-Duke Nicholas; and, since that was to go, the Russian Head-quarters Staff had another measure to apply to the retirement of their flanks. That retirement, disheartening as it might appear, would not be damaging materially if the flanks could retire in good order, and delay the enemy while the heavy centre, with all its impedimenta, was withdrawn. It was more vitally necessary in these circumstances to prevent the salient from being nipped on the Narew and the Bug; and it was here that the fiercest fighting took place, and that, in an exact interpretation of the phrase, the Russians made good their retreat. The Germans knew this for the danger zone, and heavily reinforced von Gallwitz and his colleague, von Scholtz, from the 26th July onwards, but the Russians held their ground invincibly.

They could not, however, hold all the

fronts of the vast salient covering Warsaw with equal success; for it was inevitable, in their deficiency of artillery, and in the absence of any efficient counter-battery machinery, that the resistance at the Narew must entail a heavy loss of life. Even Russia's resources of cannon fodder were not endless, and Evert and Lesch, on the south-west and south of the salient, had to give way. On 28th July von Woyrsch forced the Vistula at several points between Warsaw and the fortress of Ivangorod—which was a badly-constructed stronghold in spite of its reputation, and could not be suitably defended—and on 29th July Mackensen, thrusting forward between Lublin and Cholm, cut the railway. Lesch and his Russian army had done all that could be expected of them: they could not now hold the railway, and consequently fell back well to the north, leaving Lublin and Cholm to fall to Mackensen, while they, together with Evert's army, prepared to join themselves to the Russians still guarding Warsaw, and still holding a shrinking salient. It was shrinking in the first days of August like snow in the sun. The western guard of it had come back from the Bzura to the Blonie lines; the Blonie lines were evacuated without difficulty on the night of 4th August, and at three o'clock next morning the three bridges of the Vistula at Warsaw were blown up. It was the signal that Russia had given up the capital of Russian Poland, which two hours later was entered by the cavalry of Leopold of Bavaria.

The abandonment of Warsaw brought with it, despite the moral and material losses, such relief as may be granted by the escape from a salient full of difficulties and costly to hold; but two great perils still confronted the Russian armies. The first was that the thrusts of von Below, von Eichorn, or von Gallwitz might, after piercing the northern line, envelop one or other of the armies by rolling up its flank. Or the pressure at the centre, aided by von Mackensen's up-thrust from the south, might force a retreating, and to some extent disorganized, force to fight with its back to the Pripet marshes.

Retreat the Russians must. They were quite capable of holding up Leopold of Bavaria's army, which was not strong, because the Germans had properly disposed their greatest strength on their flanks. But though Leopold could be held back, it was not safe to delay retirement in front of him while von Woyrsch on the south, or von Gallwitz on the north, might nip the communications eastward of the retirement. The problem of the Russian Staff commanding here was to hold on just long enough and no longer. They solved it with a coolness and accuracy that cannot be overestimated. Their greater peril was from von Gallwitz and von Scholtz. These were held up on their narrow front from July till 6th August. But on 6th August the fortress of Novo Georgievsk was isolated, and von Gallwitz had advanced eastwards beyond it to where the Narew joins the Bug. On the 10th von Scholtz, on the left, took Lomza, and next day von Gallwitz, moving between the Bug and the Narew, reached the railway line feeding the main line. That forced the Russians to give up the whole of the lines on the Narew and the Bug west of this point, and heralded a retreat of which the only reassuring incidents could be those which cut their losses. Meantime the Russian centre, still retreating with masterly leisure before Leopold of Bavaria, was at Siedlice; while von Woyrsch, joining hands with Mackensen, was trying to make its position as perilous from the south as von Gallwitz was doing from the north. On the 12th August von Gallwitz was at Zambovo; von Scholtz was threatening Bielostock, on the main line between Grodno and Brest-Litovsk. On the 13th the Russian centre, unhastingly but infallibly, fell back from Siedlice and Sokolov into the deep forests of the lands of the Bug. It had gone to earth, and the greatest perils of deflating the salient were over.

There were others to come: the centre, retreating to Losice, was out of German reach; but southward von Woyrsch and Mackensen were pushing up towards Brest-Litovsk, and in the north von Gallwitz, having established touch with Leopold of Bavaria, was moving south-eastwards also, in the general direction of the fortress. It may have been the original Russian intention

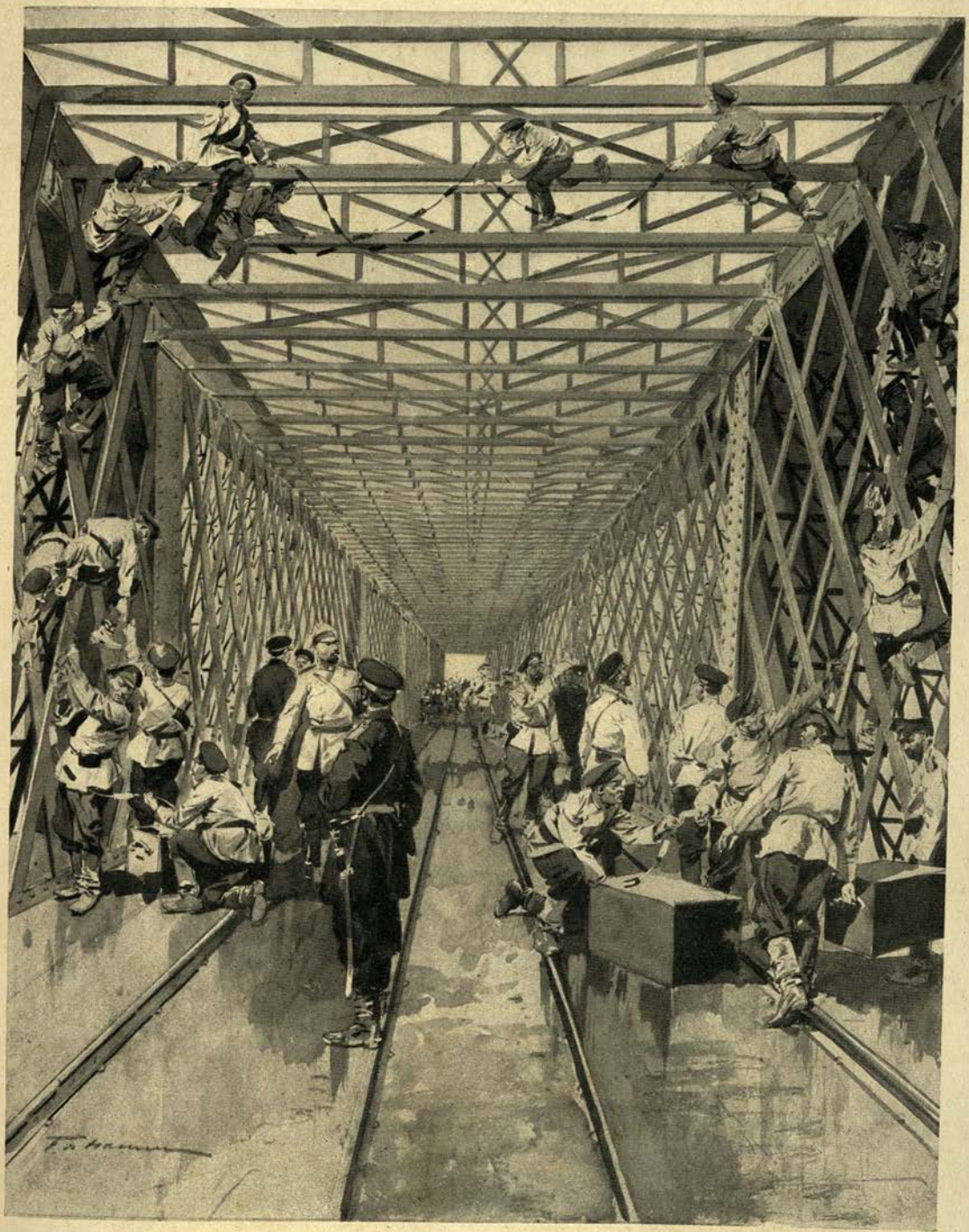
to hold the line of the upper Bug, which passes through Brest-Litovsk, and to save themselves on the lateral railway which goes to north and south through it. But this was a project which was rendered unavailable because of the premature fall of the fortress of Kovno on the Niemen, which imperilled the Niemen line and exposed any stand on the Bug and railway line to outflanking, besides imperilling the integrity of the great main line from Bielostock through Grodno, Vilna, and Dvinsk, to Petrograd. Kovno was doubly important, because it stood in the way, not merely of the prosecution of the advance of von Gallwitz and von Scholtz, but also of von Eichorn. Von Below had been checked by the Russians on 12th August,[1] and for a moment the prospects here seemed brighter, and the safety of Dvinsk and Vilna assured. But after a sacrificial resistance to overwhelming siege artillery Kovno collapsed, having held out from 4th August to 17th August. Its garrison of 20,000 men was battered into surrender. Its fall, which was unexpected, though it need not have been, placed the Russians in fresh difficulty, for it allowed von Eichorn to take his army across the Niemen and outflank the Russians on the north.

That was not the only loss which it involved. It made the fortress of Ossowiec a trap, and compelled a new retirement of the forces to the immediate south. Still farther south Leopold of Bavaria and Mackensen were able to move closer to Brest-Litovsk, which was under gun-fire on the 18th. The next day, Novo Georgievsk, some time since marooned in the flood of the Russian advance, surrendered to the heavy guns of von Beseler, the artillery general who many months before had reduced Antwerp. Its fall (19th August) involved the loss of 20,000 men and 700 guns, but the chief part of the misfortune was its removal as a menace or a hindrance to the German communications, which it had been hoped it would hold up for weeks instead for days. Nothing seemed lacking to add to Russia's discomfiture. What was left to her was not even continuity of line. She had, however, integrity of armies, no one of which had been broken, though they were now in three groups. Alexieff commanded the northern; with Hindenburg and the subsidiary commands of von Lauenstein, von Below, von Eichorn, von Scholtz, and von Gallwitz against him. General Evert was in the Russian centre, with Prince Leopold and von Woyrsch against him; and General Ivanoff commanded the southern group, and was pitted against von Mackensen (in chief command), Boehm-Ermolli, von Bothmer, and Pflanzer-Baltin; von Linsingen was in reserve.

In pursuance of the northerly thrust in the Riga sector, the German fleet had attacked Riga on 8th August and had been repulsed. It is a coincidence worthy of remark that on this day Germany made an unsuccessful offer of peace to Russia through Denmark. Needless to say, this tentative approach did not interrupt hostilities; the naval attack on Riga was resumed on 10th August, and there was an inconclusive engagement between the German and Russian fleets near Oesel on the 12th. It was followed by one in which the successes remained with the Russians. On the 18th, after a fight with the Russian fleet, the Germans retired with the loss of the *Moltke* and another cruiser, as well as eight torpedo-boats. The Germans then endeavoured to land a force at Pernau, near Riga (19th), but the contingents which they got ashore were destroyed, and on the 21st, the disembarkation project having definitely failed, the German fleet withdrew from the Gulf.

In three weeks' fighting during August the German centre had advanced 100 miles; Warsaw, Ivangorod, Novo Georgievsk, Kovno, and Ossowiec had fallen; Brest-Litovsk was isolated and, when von Gallwitz had broken through at Dobrynka, was bound to follow. It fell on 25th August. The Russian armies were, however, as already mentioned, intact, and both for security during the coming autumn and winter, and as a preliminary to further attack, it was necessary for Germany to advance farther, and to secure a strategical front which could be defended with a smaller

[1] Another repulse on the same date was inflicted on the Germans near Riga, under Lauenstein.



*Drawn by F. de Haenen*

THE GERMAN ADVANCE ON WARSAW

Russian troops preparing to blow up a bridge

number of men than were now committed to the Eastern campaign. The objectives which further operations should be undertaken to secure were (1), Riga; (2), Dvinsk and Vilna, and the lateral railway line running through them; and (3) the fortresses of Lutsk, Dubno, and Rovno, which commanded the Volhynian railways south of the Pripet marshes—a natural obstacle sufficiently formidable in paucity of communications to prevent any operations across them.

The fall of Brest-Litovsk, which was bound to take place, had not occurred too soon to prevent General Evert from getting away from it with supplies and his guns. He had escaped without being forced to accept battle on unfavourable terms; and he now had two railways, one to Minsk and the other to Moscow, to assist his retreat through the tangle of the Pripet marshes. His pursuers were delayed by the forest country of Bieloviesh in the north (Leopold of Bavaria's force) and by the fringes of the marshes in the south (von Mackensen). It was on the north, towards the main railway line, that pressure was more threatening. Von Scholtz took Bielostock on the 26th; Olita, a bridge-head of the Niemen, followed it next day; and a salient began to encircle Grodno. The next move was with von Below, who began his attack on the Dvina line with an intensified thrust towards Friedrichstadt (north) on the extreme left. (Friedrichstadt is the only practicable crossing of the Dvina between Riga and Jacobstadt). But the pressure was nowhere relaxed. Von Eichorn was moving on Vilna, General Evert was still fighting rear-guard actions in the drier outskirts of the western Pripet marshes with Mackensen, and with Prince Leopold in the forest of Bieloviesh. In the distant south the attack on the Volhynian fortresses was begun by an advance of Bothmer and Pflanzer-Baltin on the Russian positions on the Zlota Lipa, while Boehm-Ermolli, and a cavalry force under Puhallo, pushed towards Brody and Lutsk. This advance on the south was not permitted by General Ivanoff to develop except at considerable cost. On 31st August he counter-attacked vigorously near Lutsk, taking prisoners and guns; but Lutsk fell to Boehm-Ermolli on 1st September, and the Austrians entered Brody on the same day.

A loss of greater magnitude was that of Grodno, which was evacuated on 1st, 2nd, and 3rd September, a peculiarly daring counter-attack of the Russians marking the process of evacuation. On the 2nd and 3rd also the Germans had to fight very hard for the Dvina crossing at Friedrichstadt. Meanwhile (2nd September), the battle for Vilna on the railway began. The German plan was for an advance along the north bank of the Vilna River, while von Eichorn, after the fall of Grodno, pressed up in support along the southern bank. The Russians, meanwhile, hurried up every man they could spare to the threatened sector, and took up a position through Meiszagowla, 15 miles north-west of Vilna. About Vilna, as so often had happened during the Eastern campaign of 1915, the Germans designed to create a salient, and then, with a Russian army enclosed within it, to cut, on one flank or on both, the communications by which that army could retreat.

Grodno had been the apex of such a salient, and the Russians had to make good their escape from it before they could bend their energies to the protection of the more dangerous Vilna salient: protection in such an event taking the form of holding off the enemy at the flanks and on the front while the main force slowly retired and the salient was slowly deflated, like a slowly collapsing balloon. Before the Vilna salient had been created, and its possibilities exploited, the Russians had been compelled to extricate themselves from the Grodno salient, and the process of evacuation went on while the greater attack was maturing on the Vilna sector. The Grodno salient was formed by the curve of the Niemen and by its tributary, the Meretchanka, and the district enclosed is one of lakes and forests in which the Russian talent for fighting rear-guard actions was displayed to the best advantage. A rainy ten days at the beginning of September was also not unfavourable to them, because, though there were railways on two sides of the salient, from Grodno to Petrograd, and from Mosty to Minsk, there were no railways

penetrating into the heart of the positions. Thus the Russians were able to escape by successive stands on concentric lines, holding that of Mosty (south) through Skidel to the Meretchanka from 2nd September to the 8th, and then falling back to a line farther east, between Mosty and Orany, covering the big railway junction of Lida, between the 8th and the 12th. The German captures from the evacuation of the salient were only 4000, numbers which were small in the circumstances.

The battle of the Vilna salient, which began contemporaneously on 2nd September, was a much more vital affair. The Russian front lay astride the railway from Kovno to Vilna behind Koshedary, across the River Vilia and along the River Sventa to Vilkomir. To the south it extended to Orany, where the Grodno retiring force supported it. When Grodno fell von Eichorn attacked the Russian position west of Vilna, directing the peak of his attack at a point just north of Meiszagowla, the village which gives its name to the battle. The Russians, knowing this to be a key position, brought up two divisions of the Imperial Guard to defend it. Under the great weight of German artillery this position was at length carried by von Eichorn's left, and subsequently the Germans, advancing on 12th September, stormed Meiszagowla, and drove the Russians back to the River Vilia. Before that had happened von Eichorn's right had carried the important entrenchments which formed a barrier between two lakes west of Vilna. Vilna's fall became certain, and on the two following days a large force of German cavalry, sweeping round by Vilkomir, and making their way through the marshes along the railway from Shavli to Sventsiany, threatened the lines of retreat of the Vilna garrison.

Meanwhile, von Scholtz, on the southern side of the salient, was pressing beyond Mosty and Skidel, and was moving on Lida. Thus this advance, coupled with that of the battle of Meiszagowla, had by 12th September forced the Russians behind the Vilia. General Ruzsky, by this date released from apprehensions due to the Grodno salient, could reinforce his line; but on the 15th, when he was methodically evacuating Vilna under cover of these reinforcements, he was threatened with a new danger. Some 40,000 cavalry, German and Austro-Hungarian, under von Lauenstein, accompanied by 140 guns, swept from Sventsiany up the Vilia River. They swarmed all over the region which lies in the triangle formed by the two railways from Vilna to Dvinsk and to Minsk. It was the Vilna-Minsk railway at which they aimed, and by 17th September they arrived at Vileika, just north of the railway junction of Moldecezno. There was a gap between the Russian army operating in front of Dvinsk and that falling back from the Vilna salient, and it was through this gap that the cavalry had been projected. At the same time they closed in southwards of Vilna, to a point half-way between Orany and the line from Vilna to Lida.

The situation of the forces in this salient thus became serious. They had only one good line of retirement, the railway passing through Moldecezno, and a great causeway road running south of it; for though the southern railway by Lida was still open, that was not of much use to them, because they would get in the way of other Russian forces falling back eastwards before von Gallwitz and von Scholtz. Vilna fell on 18th September, an empty shell. But the greater potential prize was the Russian army retreating from the town, and retreating under the threat of the loss of the Minsk railway to von Lauenstein's cavalry. From the 15th to the 19th the situation was precarious. To protect the retreat of the Vilna army the Russians had to fight a series of battles on their northern arm, along a line in a curvilinear parallel to the lines of retreat. These desperate Russian flank-guard actions were fought in front of Michelski, Smorgon, and Moldecezno; and Vidzy, which was captured by the German cavalry, was retaken on 20th September. Even on that day the situation remained critical, for the avenue of retreat, poor in roads and having indeed only one good one, was very narrow; the Lida railway was gone, the Minsk railway threatened. But either the Russian resistance was too strong, or the cavalry too weak without the help of the German artillery to break through. The cavalry was the

The Germanic Slice out of Russian Territory to the end of the Summer Campaign of 1915

northern prong of the pincers, and the arm, though long, was ineffective. The southern prong of von Gallwitz and von Scholtz was of sterner stuff, but it moved too slowly. The German commanders here forced their way past Skidel to Mosty, but they could not force their way to Lida itself. They got as far as Slonin by the 18th, but that was not far enough. On the evening of the 20th the retreating Russians were 30 miles east of Vilna, and their flank-guards still held the railway. On the 21st the Russians struck back, and retook Smorgon; and on the 23rd scattered the German cavalry around Vileika. By the end of the month Vileika had been cleared; the Russian line had strengthened itself so as to run through Smorgon, south of Novo Grodek, and the last of the great salients had been successfully left behind. It may be noted as a significant fact that a fortnight before (15th September) Lord Kitchener had publicly declared that the Germans in the Eastern theatre had shot their bolt.

South of the great Vilna salient was that in which Evert's armies had been retreating from Brest-Litovsk. On 5th September the forces of Prince Leopold, having emerged from the forest of Bieloviecs, took possession of a passage through the marshes near Pruzany, on the Brest-Slonin road. Evert consequently withdrew his right towards the Zelianka River, keeping in touch with the retreating Grodno army. Meanwhile Mackensen was moving eastwards along the railway to Pinsk in the marshes, and he occupied that place on the 16th, the Russian rear-guards fighting an action in front of it. This army was, however, never in great danger; it could always retreat in good time. The army striking northward from Brest-Litovsk, and that moving eastwards from Grodno, were in a more difficult position, and had Leopold of Bavaria's pursuit been able to accelerate the pace, he might have been able to thrust in between them, and, by taking the junction of Baravonitchi, cut the communications with Minsk and got astride the railway running north and south to Lemberg through the marshes. In this the Germans failed, and Leopold's army was flung heavily back from Baravonitchi.

In the north, the flood tide of the German advance was slackening; in the south, where it had never set so strongly, it seemed already to have turned, though the Russian line, continually retreating during the summer, now rested its extreme left on the west bank of the Sereth, its flank protected by the Dniester. On the 7th Mackensen was moving south of the Pripet marshes towards Sarny; Boehm-Ermolli and Puhallo's cavalry were moving from Lutsk and Dubno towards Rovno; von Bothmer was approaching Tarnopol, and Pflanzer-Baltin concentrating in front of the Sereth line. It was this day and this situation that Ivanoff, commanding the southern group of Russian armies, selected for counter-attack. He threw Brussiloff against von Bothmer, and Lechitsky against Pflanzer-Baltin (8th). Both the enemy commanders were taken by surprise. Von Bothmer lost his heavy guns; Pflanzer-Baltin was badly beaten on the Sereth line; and in two days Brussiloff and Lechitsky captured more than 17,000 prisoners and 33 guns. Mackensen sought to relieve the pressure by an attack near Sarny, but effected nothing; and the successful Russian armies on the extreme south pushed the beaten Austro-Germans back to the River Strypa. Von Mackensen and Boehm-Ermolli sought to obtain compensation at Sarny and Rovno; but only lost prisoners and machine-guns by their attempts; and in the last fortnight of September, Ivanoff continued his pressure on the northerly sector of his command, and recovered Dubno and Lutsk (23rd). This reaction, together with the other operations in which the Germans had shot their bolt, brought the great summer offensive of Germany to an end.

It was a campaign which, on the authority of General Ludendorff, then acting in the capacity of Hindenburg's Chief of Staff, and actually the most responsible strategist in the Eastern theatre at that time, was Germany's main effort in 1915. It was also a subject of complaint with Ludendorff that von Falkenhayn and General Head-quarters would not agree to its further prosecution. In order to see the Great War in right perspective this fact must be clearly grasped.

Russia was called on to bear the greatest burden of the resistance offered to Germany in that year, both because it was Russia which was selected as the object of the greatest German effort, and because France and Great Britain were not ready in the West to undertake any operations which could compare in scale with those that were developed in Galicia, Volhynia, Poland, and Russia. The numbers of prisoners taken on both sides in these operations suffice to demonstrate this assertion. A minor and local action, such as Ivanoff developed between the Sereth and the Strypa in the first fortnight of September, captured over 17,000 prisoners, a greater total than that of the greatest battle fought on the Western Front in 1915, and almost equal (especially if prisoners captured in contemporaneous actions by the Russians are taken into account) to the entire total of German prisoners taken by the French and British forces in the whole of the summer.

Russia was fighting in 1915 as the British and French were fighting in 1918. She lost 2,000,000 men, and though the Germans failed ever to inflict irremediable disaster on her armies, they diminished the Russian appetite for fighting, and, to reverse the metaphor, sowed the germs of the hunger for peace. It is to be noted that von Falkenhayn in his Memoirs hints that when von Mackensen's phalanx struck, the Germans knew the Russian *moral* to be low; though whether due to Socialist propaganda or lack of supplies he does not indicate. At the same time, the German victories were purchased at the expense of many of their best fighting troops, and great as many German efforts were later in the war, none was so ample or so long sustained as that of which the Russians in 1915 were the victims. The summer campaign was over; but there yet remained to von Hindenburg the possibility of a useful triumph if he could capture Riga, and free his troops from awkward positions, especially during the winter, among the lakes and forests of the northern sector.

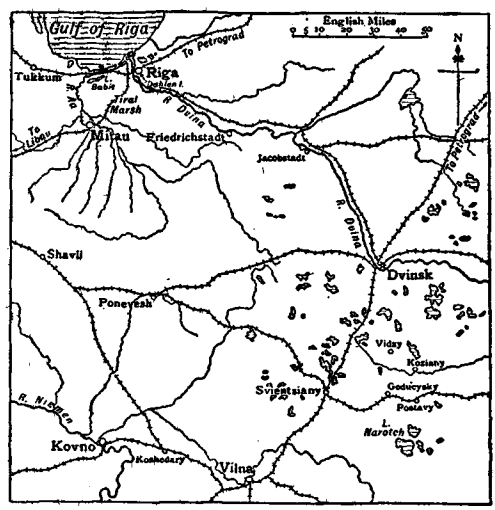
The front attacked was the line of the River Dvina from Riga to Dvinsk. Dvinsk is a main-road centre, and is on the Petrograd railway. The Dvina line has the natural protection of marshes and difficult country. Dvinsk can be attacked only along the roads leading to it; and, as the Dvina runs into the Baltic at Riga, the line cannot be turned, as the German fleet had found after its ineffective actions in the Gulf earlier in 1915. Von Below's rush in August had carried him to Friedrichstadt, but no farther, and von Eichorn in September had failed to get in below Dvinsk. There was nothing for von Hindenburg in October but a frontal attack. He made a preliminary reconnaissance in force (25th September) before both Dvinsk and Riga, and on 3rd October began an attack on an important scale with all the artillery he could get into position, and with a lavish expenditure of men. Attacks were made, as they had to be, in a series of thrusts sometimes contemporaneous, sometimes consecutive, and usually costly. By the end of the third week in October no progress had been made. Ruzsky held Dvinsk, as Verdun was afterwards held, by a field army placed well in front of the attacked stronghold.

The Germans then cut their Dvinsk losses, which were great, and shifted the attack to Riga. The Russian defence followed the half-circle of the small rivers, the Aa and the Eckau, the right resting on the sea near Kemmern, the left on the Dvina. Von Hindenburg's attack assumed two directions, one an advance from Mitau north-east along the road to Riga; the other an advance across the Dvina to turn the defence from the south-east. For the latter advance he had a starting-point at Friedrichstadt, where von Below had secured ground on the east bank of the Dvina. Thence the Germans endeavoured to work down-stream to Riga. The first advance got as far as Olai, 12 miles from Riga, General Ruzsky's defensive forces being gradually pressed back; the Friedrichstadt force, by 24th October, pushed up as far as Kekkern, which is still nearer the town. But here and at Olai the the advance stuck. The Germans could not get up enough heavy artillery to blast their way farther, and any other method of forcing their way forward was costly and out of all proportion to the ground gained. On the extreme left, attempts made in October to move from Kemmern along the strip of

land between the Aa and the sea were so unproductive that they were abandoned. In the centre the marshes so strengthened the Russian positions on the River Missa that the Germans could not force them. On the right the numerous attempts to cross the Dvina had one brief success (28th October), when a lodgment was gained on Dahlen Island, only to be lost again. On 31st October Hindenburg tried another attack on the Kemmern-Baltic sector, with heavy guns and new and large forces, but after a week's fighting the Russians, having given ground, struggled back again, and on 10th–11th November, with the aid of a flanking attack from the south, and a bombarding squadron of their ships shelling the Germans from the Gulf, won their way into Kemmern once more.

On the same day another German attack was begun at Bersemunde with the object of securing a crossing at Dahlen Island; but after temporary advances to points which could not be held, the attempts were abandoned as futile on 28th November. There had been vigorous fighting in the Dvinsk sector during this period; but here the offensive was taken by the Russians, who sought to turn the Germans out of Illutsk and the low hills which they had fortified on the western shore of Lake Sventen. General Ruzsky's forces drove the Germans from the Sventen hills during the middle part of the month, and forced the German flank at Tarnopol, north of Illutsk, on 24th November. The Germans then abandoned the salient. They had retreated from Kemmern, and on a line south-west of Riga, ten days earlier, so that by the end of November any fresh attacks they made or sustained were a part of the usual modified activity of a winter campaign. All hope of taking Riga and Dvinsk had been abandoned by them for the year. The winter quarters of the German forces in front of Riga might be uncomfortable from a tactical as well as a personal point of view, but Hindenburg's troops were too war-weary after six months hard fighting to begin a new effort to improve them.

In the Pripet marshes the German advance slackened and stopped. In the region south of the Pripet marshes Ivanoff maintained throughout October the ground he had won, and continued to carry out a series of local attacks—still on that larger scale which the battles in the West did not attain till a year later; though the difference in the conditions of country, of entrenchment, and of munitionment must all be taken into account in making such a comparison. In an action north of Tarnopol (22nd October) he captured 7500 prisoners as well as guns. In another engagement on the Strypa sec-




Hindenburg's Winter Campaign of 1915–16: map illustrating the Russian operations about Riga and the Lake District south of Dvinsk

tion, at Siemokowice (3rd November), 5000 prisoners were taken. There followed give-and-take fights which were magnified in dimensions as the latitude decreased. Thus, while in the centre, where Evert was harrying Leopold of Bavaria, they took on the aspect of raids, (though one of these raids on 29th November surprised an army corps headquarters staff west of Pinsk and captured two generals), in the south, where Brussiloff and von Linsingen were opposed, and on the Strypa, where Lechitsky opposed von Bothmer, they resembled bloody and violent soldiers' battles. Chartorysk on the Styr changed hands, for example, on 18th October, 15th November, and 19th November.

In the sectors farthest south there was, however, a strategic future to be considered.

From the Styr southwards the Austro-German armies were being strengthened with a view to influencing the dubious attitude of Roumania. On the Styr were the Fourth Austrian Army (Archduke Josef Ferdinand) the First Austrian Army (General Puhallo), the Second Austrian Army (Boehm-Ermolli), a German-Austrian army under Bothmer and the Sixth Austrian Army (Pflanzer-Baltin) stretching from the Dniester into the Bukovina. General Ivanoff rearranged his forces to meet this threatening concentration. Brussiloff's Eighth Russian Army faced the Archduke Josef and Puhallo on the Styr: Sakharoff (Eleventh Army) faced Boehm-Ermolli; a new Russian Seventh Army under Scherbatcheff was placed opposite von Bothmer; and Lechitsky, with the Ninth Army, watched Pflanzer-Baltin in the Bukovina.

Thus were the pieces set for a fresh Russian counter-offensive in the new year of 1916. They wisely selected as their sectors of attack those which were held by the Austro-Hungarian forces. These forces rendered great service—as cannon fodder—to the Germans in the war; but they were not officered or commanded by military talent, or even by military efficiency. General Ludendorff, who had the best opportunities for gauging their capacity, has bitterly complained since the war of their instability, and has likened the Austrian alliance to a broken reed. What made their armies so untrustworthy, when opposed to ill-armed Russians, was that the component races who compulsorily fought under the Hapsburg flag did not know, in Ludendorff's phrase, what they were fighting for. In no army, except afterwards in the Russian army, when courage and patriotism had been poisoned, was the *moral* so bad.

That the Russian fighting-power should have endured so long, in face of unnumbered trials, losses, discouragement, neglect, and mismanagement, is one of the triumphs of the human spirit. Everything that could have wrung the Russian heart had been suffered by them since the battle of Tannenberg, where Russian soldiers had been slaughtered by the tens of thousand owing to the blindness of Samsonoff's staff and the criminal slowness of Rennenkampf, whose dilatory negligence cost the Russians yet another victory in Poland. The Russian soldier had fought with his fists; he had faced Mackensen's artillery on the Dunajec without rifles or a second line of defence—yet another piece of negligence. The Intelligence Department of the Russian army, unless it was bribed to sell its countrymen, had forever dissipated the legend of the Russian spy system—but there is abundance of evidence that some of its members were quite willing to sell their country if they could. The Russian Baltic aristocracy were more than pro-Germans, some were anti-Russians, and the Russian Court was a mixture of folly and intrigue.

These abuses might have been survived, but there was nothing efficient outside the army; transport and the food-supply dependent on it were every day becoming involved in a more hopeless muddle. The Army Command kept itself clear of corruption, and the Grand-Duke Nicholas was strong enough and honest enough to weed out incapables. But even he was not beyond the reach of the "Dark Forces", as the corrupt and treacherous influences at Court were termed; and though he had the courage to threaten to hang the impostor Rasputin, who exercised so malign an influence at Court, he was not permitted to remain in the post where he could do most good for Russia. On 5th September the Supreme Command of the Russian armies was taken over by the Tsar, with General Alexieff as Chief of Staff, and the Grand-Duke Nicholas became Viceroy of the Caucasus. The Tsar's motives were not altogether mistaken. His assumption of the Chief Command was a token that he was above, and opposed to, the intrigues at Court which were directed to the acceptance of a German offer of peace. But the Grand-Duke had an influence in the army which the Tsar could not assume or inherit; he stood for efficiency, though he could not enforce it in either of the departments of munitions or supply. The Tsar stood for a bad system, and under the terrible medicine of war Russia was awakening to a realization of the disastrous inefficiency of the system.

Signs of revolt were apparent in the Duma

and in the newspapers, despite all the Censor could do. In Great Britain and in France the Censor was more able, or the public more gullible, but in foreign newspapers, and in neutral countries, it was being said freely at the end of 1916 that the time was coming when the Allies must choose between the Russian people and the Russian dynasty. In Russia the losses of the war of 1915 had been felt most bitterly, and hardly less bitter was the feeling, fostered by pro-German intrigue, that the French armies had not done enough. "The French official *communiqué* reports that the French have taken a tree", was one of the bitter gibes in the Russian military journal. On 7th November General Alexieff estimated that the Russian casualties were over 2,000,000 to the end of September, and called for a greater measure of co-operation between the Allied forces. The figures of losses were enormous—they were not exaggerated. It was to be proved next year that losses are in the greatest degree dependent on the volume of heavy artillery fire suffered by troops. In 1915 the Germans were better supplied than any of the Allies; and Russia was, except, perhaps, Serbia, worst off. In 1916 this situation was to be changed, but in Russia, and among the Russian armies, the mischief had been done. The hundreds of thousands of Russians who had been lost numbered those who believed in the Tsar and in Russia. Among those who replaced them were men in whom the doctrines of the extreme Socialists were implanted.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE BRITISH CAMPAIGN IN THE WEST IN 1916

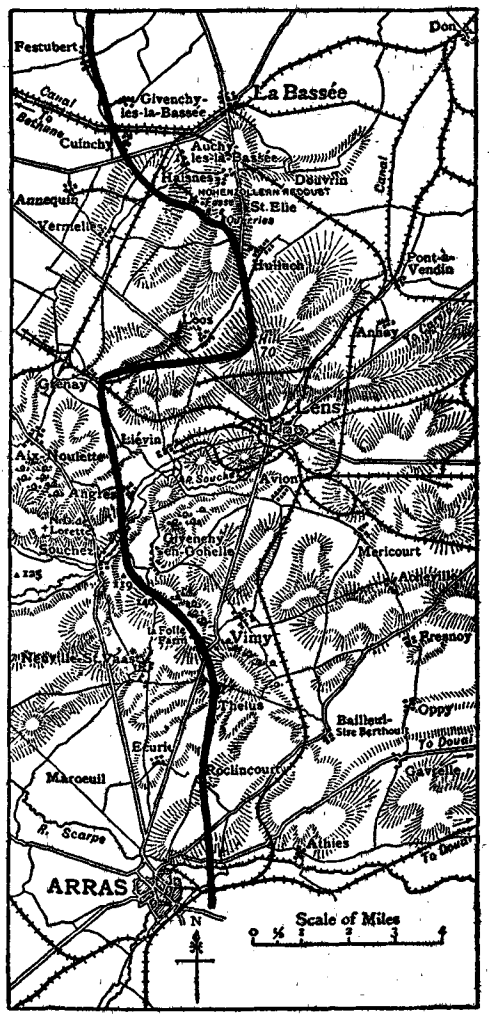
In the spring of 1916 the British army in Flanders still stood on the defensive; and both in positions and in equipment remained for several months at a disadvantage. The Ypres salient still represented all that was most horrible in military positions. With water everywhere just below the surface, its trenches overlooked and water-logged, its approaches all observed and mercilessly shelled, it was a trap in which lives were always trickling away. In guns and shells the British were slowly climbing to an equality with the Germans, but equality had not been reached; in aircraft, though from this time the command of the air was announced as within our possession, the greater versatility in finding new types was shown by the enemy, who experimented with Fokkers, Halberstadts, and Rolands while our airmen remained hampered by machines designed for inherent stability instead of for manœuvring against speedier fighting machines. The main German offensive of the spring was directed at the French lines round Verdun, where they early put into operation the battering-ram tactics which had served Mackensen so well against the Russian front on the Dunajec and the San; and this great attack lasted past midsummer. But they found men and opportunity for a number of those localized attacks, in which their technical ability served them so well, on the British.

The first serious one was directed against the section lying between the Ypres-Comines canal and the railway. A heavy bombardment on 13th February along a front held by the 24th, 50th, and 17th Divisions was followed by the springing of a number of mines and by a determined rush of German shock troops. The central point of the attack was directed to a slight elevation known as the Bluff, nearly all the garrison of which, the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers, perished. The position was rapidly occupied and put in order by the Germans, who from it could enfilade Sherwood Foresters and South Staffords to right and left of it, and compel a retirement of these gallant but unfortunate troops with heavy losses. A desperate counter-attack failed to hold the lost position, and the attack, spread-

ing outwards to the front occupied by the 24th and 50th Divisions, caught them at a disadvantage, but was eventually held by them. The Germans remained in possession of the Bluff till 2nd March, when a frontal attack, which was made by the 76th Brigade, and was strongly supported by a concentration of artillery, won back the lost position and held it against several renewed attempts of the enemy to recover it.

The remaining outstanding and typical incidents of the trench warfare in March were the protracted struggles for the mine-craters of St. Eloi, where the Germans occupied a useful little salient surrounding an elevation named the Mound. The 3rd Division, which had done so well in recapturing the Bluff, were given the task of assaulting the Mound, for the reduction of which a series of mines had been prepared as the preliminary to the assault. The mines were fired in the dark of a March morning (27th), and the operation took the form of two flanking attacks, entrusted to the 4th Royal, and the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers. The Northumberland attack prospered entirely; the Royals were not quite so successful, and the operation remained, as it were, in mid-air for nearly a week, when by successive efforts the 9th, 8th, and 76th Brigades won the position wholly and were able to give it into the charge of the 2nd Canadian Division on 4th April. The advent of the new-comers served almost as a signal for a renewed German attack. It was strongly supported and skilfully made on 6th April—at the moment when one regiment was being relieved by another—and the craters were taken. Three were retaken in a Canadian counter-attack, and for two days the struggle went on, with heavy losses to both sides, before there was a pause. The pause lasted a fortnight, and then at St. Eloi, as well as in the Ypres-Langemarck road sector, the German attack on crater and on trench began once more.

The severity and cost of this kind of struggle may be measured by the fact that, though the attacks were confined to so small a front, the Canadians, for example, lost some 1000 men a week in casualties. The fighting went on in deep pools and craters which had become mud, and in which only bombing or bayonet fighting was of any use. So the struggle continued during April all round the perimeter of the salient—costly, bloody, and disheartening. On 27th April the




Map showing approximately the British Line in Artois in the Spring of 1916, after the relief of the French Army south of Loos by Sir Douglas Haig during the Battle of Verdun

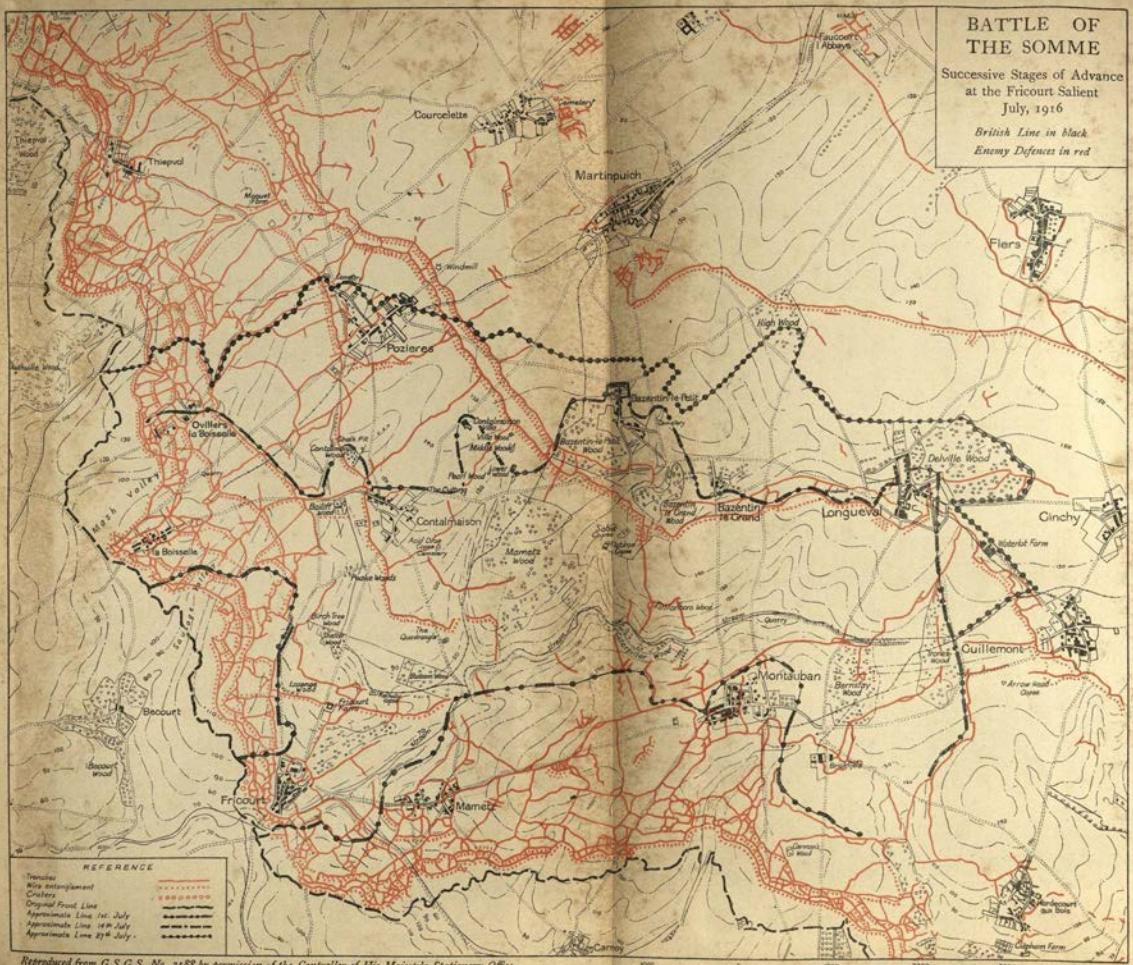
Germans varied their operation by a gas-attack on the trenches just south of Hulluch held by the 16th Irish Division. Trenches were lost by the 19th Brigade, but were retaken with the help of the 48th Brigade, aided, too, by a shift in the wind, which demonstrated the dangers of asphyxiating

gas to the assailants as well as to the assailed. A gas-attack of greater intensity directed against the Wulverghem sector on 30th April was felt as far back as Bailleul. By this time the anti-gas precautions devised by Lieutenant-Colonels Watson and Baker were sound and effective, but a continual loss of life and many casualties resulted from the gas, because it was impossible that always, and at all times, the men attacked by the fumes could assume their gas-masks in time.

During April and May of 1916 the British line was lengthened by 12 miles and extended in the following order from the coast to the Somme: Second Army (Plumer) in the Salient; First Army (Monro) to Neuve Chapelle; Third Army (Allenby) to Arras; Fourth Army (Rawlinson) to the Somme. The enemy, persevering in his attempts to keep the British occupied, continually selected points of junction of armies for their attack, and displayed a very intelligent knowledge of the moments when units were being relieved. One such German attack was delivered on 21st May, between Monro's and Allenby's armies on the Vimy Ridge, south-east of Souchez; a greater one on 2nd June against the Canadians, whom General Byng now commanded in place of General Alderson. The Canadian sector, some five miles long, extended from Hooge to St. Eloi; and in the centre were Mont Sorrel and Observatory Hill, two positions of essential importance in the flat country. The attack began with one of those combined preparations of mine and bombardment in which the Germans were the masters, and the British the pupils, aptly but painfully learning the lesson. The mines destroyed a stretch of the trenches in front of Zouave and Sanctuary Woods held by Princess Patricia's Regiment; others levelled part of Mount Sorrel. The preliminary success assured by these explosives, joined to the heavy bombardment with which they were accompanied, was complete. The line was carried from Mount Sorrel to Hooge. The gain, however, lacked depth; it was less than half a mile; the supports in Sanctuary and Zouave Woods stood their ground; and from the evening of 2nd June to 3rd June the German invaders were held and shelled.

They could not, however, be evicted from the trenches they had won by immediate counter-attack, and premature attempts proved costly of Canadian lives. It was a week before adequate local arrangements could be made, but before the first glimmer of light on 13th June the Canadians advanced again to wipe out the German victory in the Mount Sorrel sector. In this they were as successful as the first German effort had been. The line was re-established. It was imperative that it should be, since a broken position would have furnished the Germans with a better opportunity of prosecuting their aim in this as in every local attack, namely to derange Sir Douglas Haig's plans for the Somme offensive. The cost to the Canadians was high, some 7000 casualties from first to last; the German losses, deliberately incurred, may have been smaller. In these local operations the Germans left nothing to chance. There was a British local attack on the Germans on 30th June at Richebourg, and during the whole of the period under review, preliminary to the Battle of the Somme, night raids in order to obtain information and to harass the enemy were incessant. Sir Douglas Haig in his dispatch of 29th December, 1916, observes that the German operations did not succeed in interfering with his arrangement for the Somme offensive.

The Somme battles were the first emergence of the British army into fighting on the European scale of major operations, though this expression signifies no derogation from the vigour or intensity with which it had taken share in the battles of 1914, or in a year-and-a-half's defensive warfare. The defensive warfare of 1915 had been linked with heavy offensive blows; but in all of them the enemy front assaulted had been of comparatively small extent. It is something more than doubtful whether the British army in July, 1916, had reached the stage of development and training in which major operations of the kind projected were likely to be undertaken with sufficient success. So much is to be inferred from Sir Douglas Haig's cautious statement that "the British armies were growing in numbers and the supply of munitions was steadily

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increasing" but "a very large proportion of the officers and men under my command were still far from being fully trained". The longer the attack could have been deferred the better would it have suited the expectations of the British Commander, who, despite the exertions of Sir William Robertson—appointed Chief of Staff at the War Office a week before the principle of compulsory service was adopted in Great Britain (28th December, 1915)—never had the number of divisions he wanted. But the guns and shells had been coming in freely, and there were several other considerations which made an early attack desirable.

The first and chief was the situation at Verdun. In front of Verdun the French had sustained an attack on either side of the Meuse, which had all the pressure and persistence that the Germans were capable of exerting. From the last day of February onwards the French at Verdun had been the shield of the West; and despite the skill and subtlety with which General Pétain economized men in holding the German flood back, the French losses had been very heavy, and on the east bank of the Meuse especially their defensive lines had been pushed back almost to the inner ring of the fortress which, in tradition and in fact, was one of the gates of France. It was imperative that the British armies should relieve this pressure by drawing the German forces elsewhere, even though the gains they might achieve were incommensurate with the effort put forth, or the lives spent. Sir Douglas Haig, after mentioning in his Somme dispatches the situation in Italy and on the Austrian-Galician front, as a second factor in putting forward the date of the Somme offensive, speaks of a third, namely the wearing down of the enemy forces opposed to the Allies. That was done, but it was at a cost that was numerically not less than that of the German losses.

The preparations were of a character and extent which had become the normal necessity in operations which were less like battles than sieges. Vast stocks of ammunition and stores were accumulated behind the front from which the attack was to spring; lines of railways and tramways were laid down to aid in the movement of this equipment; roads were built, causeways laid over marshes and between *marées*; trenches of every kind, from communication trenches to ways for underground telephones, were dug; gun-emplacements, dug-outs, observation posts, were constructed; wells sunk and pumping plants installed to ensure a good supply of water. The scale of the preparations may be inferred from the circumstance that 120 miles of water-mains had to be laid. These preparations were largely made under fire; in the conditions of warfare on the Western front at this period no extended surprise was possible. The Germans were quite aware of the British intentions and preparations: the only surprise that could be sprung on them was such as might follow from a concealment till the last moment of the flank where the blow would fall most heavily. The German infantrymen in the front trenches not infrequently displayed placards inviting the British to come on.

In a material respect they were not less prepared. The German position in the Somme area was situated on the high undulating ground which is the watershed between the French Somme and the Belgian River Scheldt system. The watershed runs east-south-east, and the hills fall into long irregular spurs divided by wide valleys to the Somme. On the forward slopes of the hills the enemy's system of first-line defences ran from the Somme at Curlu to Fricourt, northwards for 2 miles, westward for 4. At Fricourt it turned north again, crossing the Somme's tributary, the Ancre; passing over the summit of the watershed near Hébuterne and Gommecourt, and continuing along the northern spurs to a point in front of Arras—another 6 miles in all. Along a 12-mile front between the Somme and the Ancre a second system of defence, generally on the southern crests of the hills and from 3000 to 5000 yards behind the first, had been constructed. In the two years that the Powers had faced one another the Germans had spent unending labour and all their military skill in perfecting these defences with interlaced trenches, bomb-proofs, and deep wire entanglements; the inter-

lying woods and villages had been made the foundations of fortresses by pits and quarries, cellars, and deep dug-outs; the territory between the successive lines of defences had been converted into a system of underground shelters and defences. These salients of the line had all been chosen with a view to enfilading fire; redoubts, machine-gun emplacements, mine-fields, observation-posts, had all been constructed with leisured mastery, so that it is correct to speak of the Somme defences not as one line, or two, but as a composite system from 2 to 3 miles deep. Behind the established lines others were always being added, layer on layer. The foremost lines could be seen and observed by the attack; the second system was only in a few places observable from the ground; air reconnaissance and aerial photographs alone could give its measure.

There was one, and only one, preliminary way of lessening the advantages which the strength of position conferred on the defence, and it was that of deluging it with shell. The British bombardment, delivered by a force of artillery far greater and heavier than any British army had heretofore possessed, began on the 24th of June, and lasted a week. The Royal Flying Corps, which was now equipped with a better kind of fighting-machine, carried out on 25th June a general attack on the enemy observation-balloons, and temporarily destroyed the vision of these eyes of the defence. On 1st July, in broad daylight (7.30 a.m.), after an hour of intensive bombardment and the firing of a number of mines, the attack on the wide front began. The French co-operated by attacking simultaneously on either side of the Somme.

The chief attack was made by the Fourth Army of 5 corps, which, counting from north to south, Serre to Maricourt, were aligned, 8th Corps (Hunter-Weston) opposite Beaumont-Hamel; 10th Corps (Morland) on either side of the Ancre and opposite Thiepval; 3rd Corps (Pulteney) opposite La Boisselle and Contalmaison; 15th Corps (Horne) opposite Fricourt; and 13th Corps (Congreve) in the bend of the Somme opposite Montauban. The subsidiary attack was entrusted to the Third Army under General Allenby, but only one of his corps, the 7th (Snow), opposite Gommecourt, was engaged. This corps sustained one of the most severe checks of the attack, which prospered towards the south and failed towards the north from Thiepval, across the Ancre, and along the left flank of the attack. Here the Germans had massed their best troops to meet it, and the artillery preparation, smashing as it appeared to be by the standards of 1916, had not been sufficient to destroy the continuity of the German defences, and had left the Germans' ablest weapons, the machine-guns, if not undamaged, yet little deprived in the mass of their deadly properties. A consequence was that at many points of the British advance the infantry overran positions in the first burst of the attack only to find that they had not conquered them, and that a machine-gun nest which had temporarily sheltered in its deep dug-out, or in the undestroyed traverses, emerged to take the attackers in the rear or in the flank. Nor, again, had the British bombardment smothered the German batteries; counter-battery work was yet in an undeveloped stage, and the barrage on registered zones, which the Germans had put up after the attack was under way, isolated many advanced parties. As against these costly checks must be put the fact that in throwing all their weight into repelling the northern and centre portions of the British attack the Germans exposed their southern flank not only to the assault of the British 15th and 13th Corps, but also to the French, under Foch, advancing below the Montauban bend on either side of the Somme. If they had been as successful here in checking the Allied advance, the first days of the Somme battle would have been a costly reverse. As things happened it may be written down as a costly victory.

The French attack under Foch will find its description elsewhere; it was made on a front of 8 miles, thus bringing up the length of the front attacked to 28 miles from Gommecourt, beyond the Somme, to Dompierre. On the French left and on the British right the 13th Corps (Congreve) carried Montauban before midday, and

shortly afterwards the Briqueterie to the east, and the whole of the ridge to the west of the village. This was the work of the 30th Division, raised originally from Manchester and Liverpool. On the flank of Montauban was Mametz, of equal importance if Montauban was to be held, and the fighting for this by the 7th and 18th Divisions was bitter. The assault had to charge over nearly a quarter of a mile of open ground, because the assault trenches had been levelled by the German fire. But by a happy combination of skill and determination the 7th Division forced its way into Mametz and reached the point assigned to it in the valley beyond. Conjointly with the occupation of the village a defensive flank was thrown out towards Fricourt, which occupied the same relation to Mametz that Mametz did to Montauban, and at the same time part of the 21st Division (15th Corps) got into the enemy's trenches north of Fricourt, so that the village was pressed on three sides (and was evacuated next day). Farther north the 34th Division at La Boisselle forced its way about the flanks of the village, but at a very great cost, and could not take the fortified position. The same observation applies to Ovillers, and these two strongholds, where the British losses were severe, and their gains hardly to be reckoned, mark the part where the successes of the advance faltered, and declined into failure. The 8th Division, which was associated with the attacks in this sector, had to be withdrawn next day, so severely had it been handled.

The farther north the narrative of the first day's attack progresses, the more tragic became the fortunes of the British assaulting divisions. The Thiepval salient, which was faced by the 10th Corps (Morland) with the 36th (Ulster) and 32nd Divisions, inflicted the heaviest losses on the assailants. The Ulster Division, attacking on either side of the Ancre, was directed towards Beaucourt-sur-Ancre, on the northern edge of Thiepval. Its leading files penetrated 2 miles within the German lines and reached the Schwaben Redoubt, a point not to be attained again for months afterwards. Before this grim obstacle the attack was blasted, and few who set foot there returned alive. The division left half its numbers behind, and its fighting withdrawal was almost as great a feat as its advance. Its fate was typical of other assaults equally determined, equally fruitless. The assailants reached a point where they could not be supported, where their flanks were in the air, and where, in short, they were cut off.

The 32nd Division, North Countrymen and Highlanders, were on the right of the 36th, and, like it, went forward with a rush that carried it deep into the German defences, Highland Light Infantry rushing the Leipzig Redoubt, and the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers penetrating Thiepval—from which they never emerged. The Highlanders were able to hold on to part of their gains; the history of most other units was that of advances to positions which could neither be held nor abandoned. Each failure of this kind reacted on the exertions of other units to right or to left of it, because the position to which any unit attained was tenable or untenable according to the extent to which the attackers came under the flanking fire of machine-guns.

The 8th Corps (Hunter-Weston), with the 31st Division, 48th Division, 4th Division, and 29th Division (from Gallipoli) as supports, were the troops picked for the formidable task of assaulting Beaumont-Hamel. The task was beyond them. The Germans were too well prepared, and their defensive artillery, and, above all, their machine-guns, were disposed and directed with a skill and courage which made the display of similar qualities in the assailants of no avail. The epitaph on the assault is found in an expression of which Sir A. Conan Doyle makes use of in his history of the battle: "The 29th Division, which was on the right of the attack and nearest Beaucourt, rivalled in its constancy, and exceeded in its losses, its comrades on the left". Each of the divisions was too heavily hit to make it possible to renew the attack by nightfall. As complete as Hunter-Weston's failure to accomplish the impossible was that of the 7th Corps (Snow), the 46th and 56th Divisions of which attacked the salient on either side of

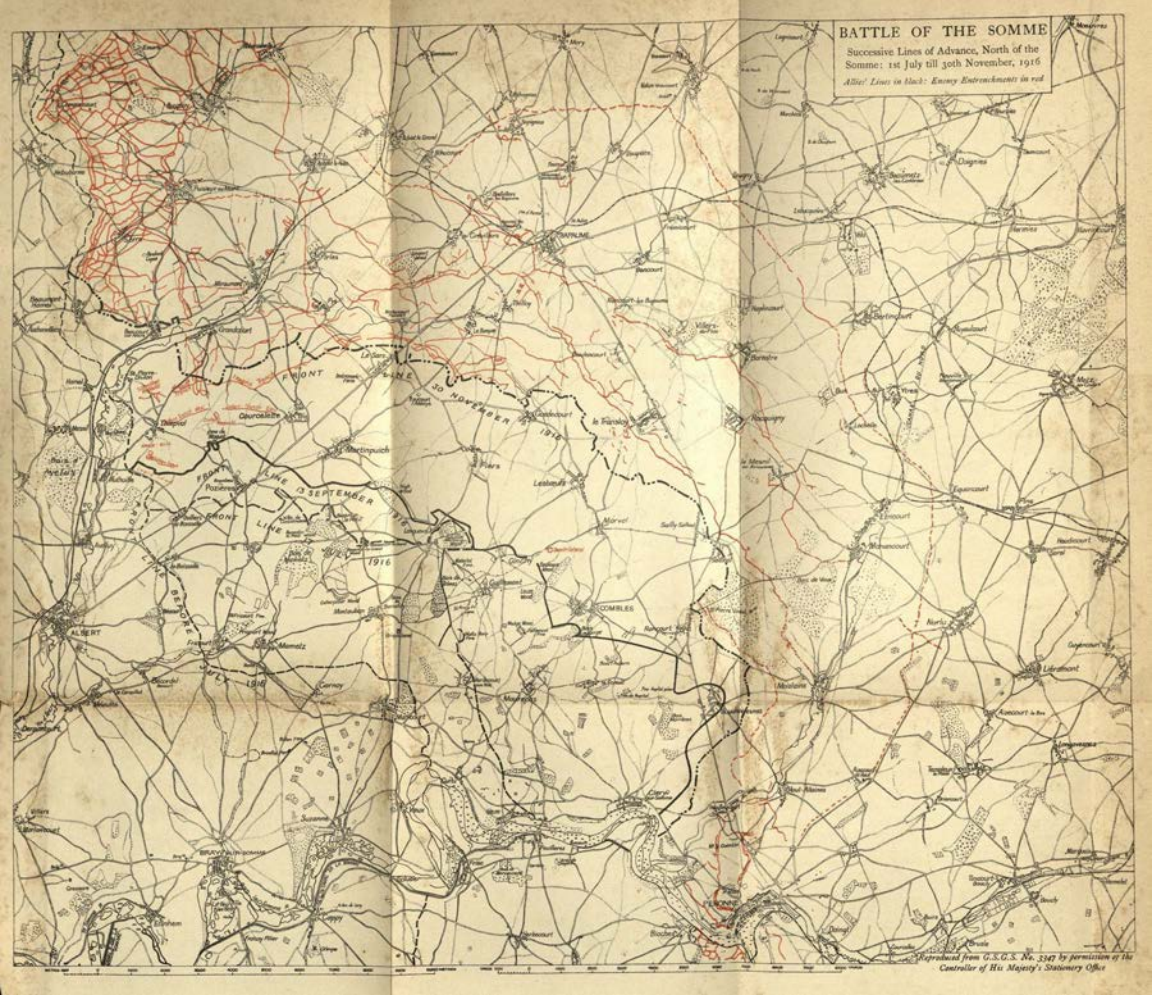
Gommecourt. The attack advanced over soggy ground under cover of smoke. The leading units reached and passed the first German trench lines in spite of the fierce machine-gun fire that met them, but were then cut off from support by the German barrage between the lines, till the too weak assault perished for want of weight and numbers. The attack on the south side of Gommecourt Wood passed three lines of German trenches; it withered in front of the fourth. The 56th Division, in which were a large number of London men, suffered very severely, and effected nothing beyond the sacrificial feat of drawing on themselves some of the best fighting material, and some of the heaviest artillery concentration of the Germans. They were, to use an expression coined by a French officer two years later, when the last efforts of Ludendorff fell on General Gough's army at St. Quentin, the " wing of sacrifice ". It seems, in a review of the day's work, that Sir Douglas Haig's estimate (Dispatch 23rd December, 1916) of the attack at Gommecourt, for example, " as soon as it was considered that the attack had fulfilled its object our troops were withdrawn ", is not very illuminating.' The truth lies between that and the German description of it as a bloody repulse. It was a most costly method of warfare;[1] and the best to be said of it is that at the time the British could find no better one.

The decision taken by the British Commander-in-Chief at the end of the day was dictated by the evident impossibility of bursting a way through on his left flank, joined to the possibilities which opened out to him from the successes that had been gained by the cracks in the German line between Fricourt and Frise. Sir Douglas Haig remarks in his dispatch that he decided as his best course to press forward on a front extending from the junction with the French to a point half-way between La Boisselle and Contalmaison, and to restrict the offensive on the northern portion of his line to a slow and methodical advance. In other words, north of the Ancre no more was to be done than to hold the Germans to their positions. General Gough therefore took over the 8th and 10th Corps opposite Beaumont-Hamel and Thiepval, and General Rawlinson was left with the 3rd, 15th, and 13th Corps to prosecute the attack at the sectors where results commensurate with the effort made had been obtained.

Rawlinson's 3 army corps began at once on 2nd July to consolidate their conquest of the first line of the German defences opposite to them, a task which occupied five days. The Germans, ever mindful of the value of pivot positions, strongly counter-attacked at Montauban and the Briqueterie early on 2nd July, but without noticeably retarding the British advance, which submerged Fricourt without opposition, and stormed Fricourt Wood and the farm north of it, during the afternoon and evening of the same day. During the next two days Bernafay Wood and Caterpillar Wood were captured, and the line advanced to the railway north of Mametz. La Boisselle, a point of essential importance, was very strongly defended by the Germans; three days were occupied in its reduction by the encircling pressure of 3 divisions. After its capture the assailants pressed into the outskirts of Contalmaison. With the capture of the four fortified villages, La Boisselle, Fricourt, Mametz, and Montauban, the first stage of the operations reached the partial objective of the attacks, namely, the conquest of a portion of the German first line, the defenders of which had here been pushed back a mile over a front of 6 miles and had lost about 6000 prisoners.

It now became necessary to relieve divisions which had been heavily engaged, and to readjust forces and artillery for a second attempt to blast a way forward. It was fairly evident at this date that no break through was in sight, and that nothing but systematic reduction of the enemy's positions held any promise of success. It was still hoped that the continual pounding to which the forces holding them were to be subjected would effect by successive blows what certainly could not be effected by any one stroke, however heavy, that the British forces could inflict. As the preparations for an attack on

[1] The casualties of the day's fighting were little short of 50,000. The British took 3500 prisoners; the French 6000.


BATTLE OF THE SOMME
Successive Lines of Advance, North of the Somme: 1st July till 30th November, 1916
Allies' Lines in black: Enemy Entrenchments in red
FRONT LINE 30 NOVEMBER 1916
FRONT LINE 3 SEPTEMBER
FRONT LINE 1 JULY 1916
ALBERT
COMBLES
BAPAUME
PÉRONNE
MONTAUBAN
MAMETZ
GUILLEMONT
GINCHY
FLERS
LEUZE WOOD
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a great scale did not interfere with the continuous pressure at selected points north of La Boisselle, the thrust towards Contalmaison began on the 7th. It lasted three days before its machine-gun defences were silenced and the obstinate German counter-attacks were beaten back. A footing was gained in Ovillers on the same day that the struggle for Contalmaison began, and with what extremity of effort that village was wrested from the Prussian Guard who defended it only the casualty rolls of the assaulting battalions could indicate. It was not till a night attack of the 15th–16th July captured the remnants of the garrison—two German officers and 125 men—that the place was occupied. Ovillers was on the left of the line; Hardicourt and Trônes Wood were on the right; and in Trônes Wood the German positions, and the German determination to hold them, were as stern as at Ovillers. A lodging was gained in Trônes Wood on 8th July by one brigade, but this success was no indication of the strength of the position. The Germans counter-attacked and drove the assailants back again, and each new attack seemed to find the defence stronger and the defenders harder to move. When the bulk of the wood was taken at last, on 13th July, it was found that at least six German regiments had been used in its defence. Their defence had been a feat of arms surpassed only by that of the stormers. The defences of Mametz Wood gave hardly less difficulty. With these two woods in British hands it became possible to arrange a concerted attack on the Fricourt line of the German defences.

The form of this attack was one on which Rawlinson's army could justly pride itself. It was delivered against a front extending from Longueval through Bazentin-le-Grand village to the wood of Bazentin-le-Petit, which is north-east of Mametz Wood and Contalmaison. Contalmaison Ville, on the extreme left of the attack, had been secured, and with it protection for that flank, but the general idea was to deliver a heavy blow at the enemy's centre, and, having dented it heavily, to turn right and left, and deal thereafter with the flanks, of which Delville Wood on the right was the most menacing. The artillery was shifted up, and a bombardment, beginning on the 11th July, was made preliminary to an attack fixed for dawn on the 14th. But the more striking preliminary was the moving up of the assaulting battalions under the cover of darkness, over distances averaging two-thirds of a mile to within striking distance of the German trenches. It was a manœuvre both delicate and hazardous; but thanks to extremely good staff-work, and impeccable discipline and order, it was safely accomplished, and the subsequent course of the action of the 14th July is proof that the Germans were without suspicion of it. At dawn, the line, which had lain for hours without cover, rose to its feet and went forward after the barrage. On the right, the attack entrusted to the 9th Division swept through the last defences of Trônes Wood, releasing a small body of some 200 Kentishmen who had maintained themselves alone there for a day and a night. The position was consolidated, and nearly all of Longueval village captured after a fight lasting till the evening. In the centre of the attack Bazentin-le-Grand village was taken by the 3rd Division, but only by hard fighting. The losses were heavy, but not disproportionate to the gain.

On the left, the 7th Division took Bazentin-le-Petit village, and the 21st Division the wood. Both divisions took full advantage of the surprise which had been risked, and the capture of the village was accomplished with extraordinary swiftness. The retention of it was a harder matter: and in the wood the clearing up of machine-gun redoubts was expensive: but both village and wood were soundly held. When the consternation of surprise was over the Germans reacted, but their counter-attacks everywhere lacked their usual decision; and General Rawlinson, taking advantage of a disorganization of the enemy, employed a means of enlarging his victory, unusual enough to draw special mention from Sir Douglas Haig, by sending in some cavalry with the infantry to penetrate High Wood. The net result of the battle of the Bazentins was that the German second line had been crushed in, though only over a 3-mile front. Its flanks were still to be dealt with, and it

was the effective way in which the Germans buttressed these flanks that made the task unceasingly hard for many weeks to come. A dent 3 miles wide was not enough to turn round in for the purpose of rolling up flanks.

Later in the war a theoretical relationship between the width of a break through, and the depth to which it could be pushed while the flanks held fast, was established. But on the 15th July, and subsequent days, Rawlinson strongly dug his way into the openings he had made. Subsidiary German strong points, which had been converted into awkward salients by the advance, were reduced; and after the last orchards of Longueval had been plucked of their defenders, Delville Wood on the right was captured, and the gains at Little Bazentin extended towards Pozières. The movement towards that village stronghold was aided by the activities of General Gough farther north. Gough had been entrusted to keep the enemy employed, and his troops about Ovillers interpreted the instructions as comprising an unceasing pressure on that place. On the 16th of July part of the German garrison surrendered, and on the following day the remnants of the village were rushed. From Ovillers an advance northwards and eastwards was made towards Pozières. The action as a whole was one of the most satisfactory of the constituent operations which made up the long battle of the Somme. It brought up the total of prisoners since 1st July to 10,000, and of guns to over 50. The French had also done well; their results were numerically better than those of the British; and at this time hopes were entertained that the hammering, the heaviest for two years that the Germans had sustained, was beginning to shake them.

But the narrowness of the purchase won on the ridge where the German line of defences lay could not be ignored. Rawlinson's troops had pushed their way into a salient in which they were exposed to a converging cross-fire that increased in volume as the Germans recovered their elasticity, and invited counter-attack. On the left flank were the villages of Thiepval and Pozières, elaborately entrenched, hard to take, and a poisonous thorn in the British side while untaken. They could be slowly reduced; but Delville Wood and Longueval, where the British line was thrust forward into a narrow peak of the salient, were yet more actively dangerous. From Delville Wood the plateau defences occupied by the German defences went north-east to Les Boeufs and Morval; thence south-east to Leuze and Bouleaux Woods. Before the British line could be straightened eastwards, therefore, Guillemont, Leuze and Bouleaux Woods had to be captured; and the importance of denying them to the assailants was perfectly understood by the Germans, who could neither be rushed nor taken by surprise. It was important that, as the British right swung up, the French left north of the Somme should travel with it. The French Commander's objective was Sailly-Saillisel: the British Commander's, Morval. The French task comprised the capture of four fortified villages, and many woods in this country of plantations; and the conjoint advance could be made only by careful co-operation. Once again there was no possibility of a quick succession of hammer blows: methodical preparations had to be made for driving forward the steel-fronted boring drills to which brigade and divisional fronts might be compared.

Such operations were not conducted against a passively resisting enemy, but against one which lost no opportunity of counter-attack. The British had penetrated Delville Wood: two strong posts had not been captured, and on 18th July an attack, pushed by the Germans with all the energy of which they were capable, came to reinforce these strongholds. The Germans surged in great numbers through the wood, pressing back the British to the southern side, and threatening, by coming through, to take the British new line in the flank west of Longueval. The British, therefore, now were forced into the role of defenders: and for a week to follow the struggle for this area of splintered tree trunks went backwards and forwards. This desperate give-and-take fighting was typical of the conditions with which the operations had now settled down. The moment of surprise was over, forces approximately equal locally were pitted

*Drawn by F. Matania*

CHARGING THROUGH CLOUDS OF POISON GAS

A daring raid by British soldiers wearing smoke-helmets

against one another, and surprise or success could be won only by superior skill or determination. A footing was obtained in High Wood on 20th July, and this line linked up with Longueval. But a general tentative advance on 23rd July, on a wide front, found the enemy well prepared with machine-guns, and with forces skilfully established in shell-holes in advance of his main positions; and the attack was not pressed. A simultaneous assault, delivered by the right wing of General Gough's army in the direction of Pozières, immediately won ground, and was otherwise remarkable for one of the first appearances of the Australians on the Western Front. They confirmed the expectations formed of them after what they had done in Gallipoli, and in the trench fighting which followed the first rush laid the foundation of the reputation which they won from Germans, and from our Allies the French, as unsurpassable "shock" troops. Pozières was completely captured on the 25th by English and Australian battalions, and the position enlarged.

Delville Wood and Longueval were finally taken on the 27th, and it then became imperative to extend Rawlinson's operations on the right towards Guillemont, and ultimately towards Ginchy, thus co-operating with the French. Guillemont, and Falfemont Farm to the south-east, were attacked on the misty morning of 30th July, while the French attacked farther south. The action was lost in the fog, in a double sense. Guillemont was entered, but it could not be held, and the attacks on the flanks were wasted, and many men lost. A second attempt on the village was made a week later, when the Germans were still better prepared, and again, though the frontal attack gained an entrance to the village, the flanks protecting it were not taken, and the attack failed. It became evident that while the capture of Guillemont was a useful preliminary to advance farther south, yet isolated assault on it, in order to succeed, would be too expensive. It was decided, therefore, to make its capture part of a general scheme in which the French were to combine, and which should embrace Maurepas, Falfemont Farm, Leuze, and Ginchy, with Guillemont included as a half-way house. The first attempt to put this scheme into execution on 16th August disclosed the difficulties, but two days later, with a thirty-six hour bombardment as a send-off, French and British went forward over a fairly-extended front. In the Guillemont sector the advance gained a footing in the outskirts of the village and took the station. The Germans reacted with violence three days later, but the gains were held, and farther ground was made to the north in front of Delville Wood. During the whole of August the sputtering fire of the battle to improve the positions which the British had won went on, with gains of a ridge and observation posts above Martinpuich, and progress towards the great fortifications of the Thiepval salient, near Mouquet Farm.

All these operations were the preliminary to the moment when, with dangerous isolated obstacles removed, a push on a larger scale could be renewed. The moment for it came on 3rd September, when the new thrust was made on a front extending from the junction with the French to the Ancre. The French attacked simultaneously. Guillemont, to the outskirts of which the British had resolutely clung, was stormed, consolidated, and passed, the stormers pushing on without a check to Ginchy. Ginchy was seized, but could not be consolidated before the German counter-attack broke on it. The tenacity of the British would not yield it wholly, though most of their gains could not be kept. The fight for it went on for several days afterwards. But the corresponding German counter-attack on Guillemont failed altogether, and those on Falfemont Farm, which also had been reached with a rush, were only temporarily effective. Falfemont Farm's fortifications were captured piecemeal by 5th September, and at the end of four days' fighting the British right had been advanced for nearly 2 miles to a depth of a mile, penetrating the German original second line of defence here, and, most important of all, breaking at last a barrier which had been maintained for nearly seven weeks against its assailants. A thousand prisoners were taken.

The success was rounded off by a care-

fully considered attack on Ginchy, as well as to the north of Leuze Wood. The crack which had been opened a few days before spread. Ginchy was triumphantly passed and the line advanced east of Delville Wood and High Wood. The French had been no less successful, the thrusts mutually aiding one another. Their line had been brought to a point just south of Combles, to Le Forest and to Clery on the Somme, so that the exposed salient in the Allied lines had disappeared, and the necessary space for wider operations gained. The whole of the forward ridge from Delville Wood to Mouquet Farm, over 5 miles, was now in British hands, and east of Delville Wood to Leuze Wood the positions on the main ridge were firmly established. The French were advancing across the Combles valley. These successes, though the cost had been severe, were significant not merely of the new-found strength of the British fighting arm to meet and defeat the enemy, even when the Germans had the very great advantage of ground and of scientifically chosen and prepared defences, but were indicative, from the course which the operations had followed, that the ability of the German soldiers to stand up to punishment was declining. This was shown also by the frequent failure of the counter-attacks. Nevertheless, the soundness of the German engineering was such that no quick collapse could be expected. On the flanks of the enlarged gap into which the Allied forces were driving were many positions which promised to demand as much sacrifice for their reduction as any yet conquered.

From Ginchy the crest of the rolling plateau runs northwards for more than a mile before throwing out a 2½-mile spur eastwards, towards Morval. The spur dominates a wide field of fire. Leuze Wood, in the British hands, was distant from Morval by more than a mile of valley, and the valley was commanded by the spur. High ground, north and east, also overlooked the approach, and it was to this that the French were working. Their point to be reached was Sailly-Saillisel, and the valley in which the little town of Combles lies. Between the French and British objectives Morval and Sailly-Saillisel both presented extremely awkward problems; and that to be solved by the French was, if anything, the harder because of the narrowness of the approach. The task could only be performed by a very accurate parallel advance. "Unity of command is usually essential to cope with such a situation"—the observation is Sir Douglas Haig's. The substitute for it was cordial good-will between the Allied armies and their commanders. Precedent to combined action was the improvement of the British position on its left flank towards Thiepval, where General Gough's right-hand corps plodded methodically forward. The Thiepval work, immensely strong, had presented too costly an undertaking, if stormed in July, but by process of slow reduction it was now ripe for capture. On the 14th of September a forward system of defences, known as the Wonder-work, was taken, and the way was then clear for rushing the main position without severe loss.

A heavy bombardment had been in progress since the 12th, when the main assault began on the 15th. The plan of this attack was to pivot on Gough's army south of the Ancre and north of the road from Albert to Bapaume, while Rawlinson's Fourth Army struck at the remaining system of German defences between Le Sars and Morval. If this thrust prospered the attack was to spread leftwards towards the Ancre so as to take in Martinpuich and Courcelette; and if, again, this went well Gough would bring the left over the Thiepval Ridge. The French share in this attack was to press up beyond Combles, so as to clip it in one arm of a pair of pincers, while at the same time getting nearer to Sailly-Saillisel. The results could not be effected at one blow. The foregoing plan contemplated continuous operations over a considerable period. The first assaults on 15th September succeeded to the level of expectations. They were assisted by the appearance for the first time of the new weapon, the Tanks.

The Tanks were then in their infancy; the methods of handling them were being learnt, and before their ascendancy was established they encountered many vicissitudes and a number of failures. But on

15th September they had all the advantage of surprise. They led the way into Flers, followed by troops which cleared the village and went beyond it. On the right, Rawlinson's attack got to striking distance of the German line Morval - Les Boeufs - Guedecourt. On the left, the treacherous High Wood, the grave of so many brave men, yielded at last, though a high price of gallant men's lives was exacted for its capture. These advances made the way clear for the contemplated extension leftwards; and Martinpuich and Courcelette were taken by the right wing of Gough's army. The completion of the advance involved three days' more hard clearing up, but by the 18th the Quadrilateral, a strong German work blocking the road to Morval, was captured and the success thus rounded off. This victory over a 6-mile front was the most productive of any one assault since the operations begun in July. It added six square miles, three villages, two lines of defence, and 4000 prisoners to the account. The fighting, though hard, was less costly to the British than hitherto.

There was a week's pause, due in part to unlucky weather, before a renewed bombardment struck the hour on 25th September for the exploitation of the gains from Martinpuich to the Somme. The British were to take Morval, Les Boeufs, Guedecourt, and the country north of Flers stretching to Martinpuich. The French were to push to Rancourt and Fregicourt. The programme was carried out according to plan, except at Guedecourt, where a trench full of Germans, who stood to their defences with unflinching determination, brought the advance to a standstill. The French, by their capture of one village and their grip on the other, had joined with the captors of Morval to encircle Combles, which next morning was entered simultaneously on either side by British and French. It was strongly fortified, though it had never had the opportunity of displaying its powers of resistance. On the same day Guedecourt was cleared up in rather a remarkable way. The commander of the battalion which had been held up sent for a Tank, which, coming up, started down the portion of the belligerent trench followed by bombers. The Germans could not get out at the southern end, and were thus compressed as by an irresistible piston. An aeroplane soared above the trench, machine-gunning its occupants. The combination was too much for them, and the Germans surrendered to the aeroplane by waving white handkerchiefs to it. Some 370 survivors of the trench were captured, and the British casualties amounted to five!

The second part of Sir Douglas Haig's plan, namely the attack by Gough on the left of the position, where the buttress of Thiepval barred the way, could now be begun. Before the enemy could recover from the effects of the blow struck by the Fourth Army, the Fifth Army launched an attack against Thiepval village and ridge (26th September). The German position, consisting of the fortified village, and the three connected redoubts, Zollern, Stuff, and Schwaben, was the typical field fortress. At an earlier stage of the operations it would have proved impregnable; and its capture, even at a moment when the German *moral* was shaking, deserves the adjective "brilliant", which Sir Douglas Haig applied to the performance of Gough's divisions. The attack succeeded most swiftly on the right of the position. In Thiepval, in Mouquet Farm, and in the Zollern Redoubt the Germans held on in their sunken defences till they were bombed out. Mouquet Farm was carried by the third storming wave early in the afternoon; its cellars were not emptied of Germans till sunset. Into Thiepval village some Tanks ploughed their way, but the bombing and rooting-out processes continued all night, and till broad daylight of next day, before the whole village was purged. The sixteen hours' fighting not only won the stronghold, but some 2000 prisoners. The integral parts of Stuff Redoubt and Schwaben Redoubt were taken on the 27th. The Fourth Army, continuing its pressure during this more concentrated operation, carried another portion of the fourth German line of defence, north-west of Guedecourt, throwing back the defenders on to the defences of Eaucourt, L'Abbaye, and Le Sars.

The British line was now again in movement, rolling slowly onward as the Germans withdrew in order to straighten their line; and by the 3rd of October Eaucourt and L'Abbaye, not without a struggle, were taken, and the approaches to Le Sars commanded. The artillery was coming up well behind the quicker advance, and was gaining accuracy and imparting confidence. Le Sars fell on the 7th of October, during the progress of operations designed primarily to aid the French in their approach to Sailly-Saillisel. The advance could not go on without pauses, for the September rains were making the difficulties of getting up the artillery extreme. But every time an attack could be sent forward it gained ground and took prisoners. Nearly 1000 were taken on 7th October in the attack on Le Sars, and in the corresponding thrust on a spot south-west of Le Transloy. But as the enemy began to lose his hold on the whole ridge between the Ancre and the Tortille, his efforts to retain what he still preserved of the high ground above Thiepval and Saillisel became more determined. Especially did he struggle hard in the Thiepval area, where the ridge north of the village carried with it observations of all the positions in the Ancre valley: and his counter-attacks were persistent.

It suited the British commander best to hold tight to what had been gained here, and along the sector from Le Sars to Guedecourt, allowing the Germans, in their own phrase, to bite on granite, and expend men on assaults which gained nothing and regained nothing. But on the British right the Germans were still strongly sited and entrenched about Le Transloy and Beaulencourt, the advanced village fortresses covering Bapaume. They were also digging themselves in as hard and fast as circumstances permitted, and it became desirable for the British to interrupt these operations before they had progressed too far, and while there remained opportunities of rushing them. A condition precedent to complete success was the possession of Sailly-Saillisel and its heights and defences: and, unfortunately for the carrying out of an ideal plan, the weather again broke, flooded the shell-pitted fields and hard-used roads, and made the ground so lately won almost impassable to lorries or other vehicles of supply. Progress was made; the French got a footing in the twin villages of Sailly-Saillisel; the British right now edged forward eastwards; but it was becoming dolefully evident that the weather would not clear up in time for the big attack to be made on the heights.

While waiting, Sir Douglas Haig renewed his pressure on the western flank, and took advantage of a spell of October crispness to put in a left-handed blow at the trench system of the Schwaben Redoubt and its environs. Again a gratifying profit was made at a small expenditure. The infantry took all the points assigned to them, and 1000 prisoners as well. These operations were preliminary to an attack on a greater scale at a moment to be chosen when weather again permitted a choice. Meanwhile, another attempt was made to achieve some substantial progress towards the Sailly-Saillisel heights and the St. Pierre Vaast Wood, which was the watch-dog of the position. Some ground was made on 23rd October, and again on 5th November; the British pushed a little farther along the Le Transloy spur; a network of trenches which had held up both French and British where the forces joined was also cleared up. The chief object, however, was not attained. The enemy had here been afforded time in which to stiffen his troops and bring his defences up to the pre-July standard. So far from laying himself open to be rushed, he was again launching counter-attacks.

It was clear by this time that, apart from some meteorological miracle, there would be no opportunity of a quickly-exploited success in this direction. A better opportunity offered on the Ancre, where the Germans were still unsteady from the loss of positions and prisoners. Even here, however, no wide-fronted attack could be projected, because the prospects of consolidating any ground won under pouring skies and shortened days had to be taken into account. Nor had the Germans been idle in the four months which had elapsed since the British assault recoiled from in front of Beaucourt and Beaumont-Hamel: they had fortified and refortified their lines and village strongholds,

*Drawn by R. Caton Woodville*

PIPERS LEADING A CHARGE

A body of Highlanders preceded by pipers crossing "No Man's Land" at Longueval

and had introduced an additional division to reinforce the garrisons. But on 13th November, after four fine days which had hardened the ground a little, and after two days of concentrated bombardment, Gough's troops attacked on both sides of the Ancre. They went forward in a thick mist, and south of the river they met with a success which was remarkable alike for its rapidity and for the smallness of the cost. Before it was light the assailants had gone past St. Pierre Divion, and had hemmed in its garrisons between the village and the river. Many Germans hastily fled to their dug-outs, and the attacking battalion soon had more prisoners than its own number. The village soon fell: in all 1400 prisoners were taken there, at a cost of 600 casualties in the division which had been entrusted with the job.

The fight on the other side of the river was a much more sanguinary business. Parts of the German line gave way, but parts refused to budge, and fought to the death where they stood. Yet the main British attack was able to get on. The troops close to the Ancre pushed on so far that they got out of touch with their supports and with the division on their left. But they dug themselves in as best they could, and held on there all day and through the night. Towards Serre on the other flank, to the north of the river attack, the troops could not get over the heavy ground before the fire which opened on them compelled the abandonment of their attack. In the centre Beaumont-Hamel was taken by Scottish troops, and the outskirts of Beaucourt were occupied by the Royal Naval Division. Next morning the attack jumped off at once from its coigns of advantage, for the Germans had made no attempt at reaction. The whole of Beaucourt was carried, and the line was pushed forward so as to extend to the north-west along the Beaucourt road, across the southern end of the Beaumont-Hamel spur. On succeeding days more of the spur was carried. Such is the story of the best blow at the German lines which the weather of 1916 permitted to Sir Douglas Haig; it had secured command of the Ancre valley just where the river enters the enemy's lines, and had added 7200 prisoners to a total which, since the Somme battle began, had risen to 38,000, including 800 officers. The guns in the same period numbered 29 heavy, 96 field-guns, 136 trench mortars, 514 machine-guns.

In reviewing the period covered by what is known as the Somme Battle, Sir Douglas Haig remarked on the steady deterioration in the *moral* of the German troops under the continued hammering to which they were subjected. He said, also, that despite the abandonment by the Germans of the Verdun offensive (which it had been one of the objects of the Somme Battle to compel), the numerical strength of the Germans in the West was greater in November than in July. The British attack had been made by troops the vast majority of whom had been raised and trained during the war; many counted their service by months. The results gained were on that account remarkable. It is impossible, however, to remark them without the further consideration that had their commander been able to wait longer, and give to them better training, and, moreover, had he been able to pause till their numbers were considerably augmented, the success would have been more striking. The task laid on them in attacking such formidable strongholds held by the best instructed army in the world was too heavy, the handicap too severe.

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# CHAPTER X

## VERDUN AND THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN OF 1916

### PART I

In the latter portion of the dispatch in which Sir Douglas Haig describes the operations of the Somme Battle and the results it achieved, both in relieving the pressure on the French at Verdun, and in pinning the Germans definitely down to the whole Western Front, he pays a tribute to the part taken by the more westerly sectors of the British armies from Ypres to Albert in conducting during the whole of the four months' battle their daily task of raiding, demonstrating, and, one may add, enduring. The whole line from Nieuport to the Somme had experienced the arduous duties since the beginning of the year, and especially in the months before the Germans showed their hand in their great assault at Verdun. The plan was von Falkenhayn's, and it was engineered with the intention of exploiting to the utmost the advantages which the heaviest possible concentration of artillery could achieve.

Before the attack began, the Germans masked their intentions by a number of attacks on points of the line where salients, or the general lie of the ground, would favour the interpretation that here (or there) was the point chosen for their supreme effort. Thus, from the beginning of the year, feelers were thrown out; minor attacks, planned as if to sound the possibilities of major ones, were made on the Yser, at the Hohenzollern Redoubt, at Hulluch, at Vimy. Where the French had halted in front of the Butte de Tahure, and at other salients of their Champagne line, the Germans probed them, and often thrust forward an attack with considerable energy, and sometimes with success. South of the Somme, and as far along the line as Alsace, the attacks appeared to test the defences, and conceal, or reveal, an intention. As a fact, Verdun, which lies across one of the historic routes of the invaders of France, and in the possession of which an enemy would entirely disorganize the continuity of the French line, had long been chosen by the Germans for their colossal blow, the elements of which were the artillery concentration and the succession of attacking divisions, each division being withdrawn after its work was done.

Verdun, Belfort, Toul, and Epinal were the four fortresses on which French armies, defending the country from an invasion from the east, would base themselves. Verdun was fortified at the beginning of the war by an outer line of forts, with batteries pushed out in a circuit of 30 miles; and with inner redoubts. The forts were modern according to pre-war standards, but the reduction of Liége and Namur, not to speak of the Russian fortresses, by the German-Austrian siege artillery, made them palpably obsolete; and the first year of the war was spent in enlarging the perimeter of the defences. The long struggle in 1915 for Les Eparges, on the heights of the Meuse overlooking the plains of the Woevre, while it did not enable the French to extinguish the St. Mihiel salient below Verdun, was valuable for its effect in extending the lines of the French fortress. The old town of Verdun lies deep on the Meuse. North of it, and west of the river, low hills begin to rise, the chief of which is the Charny Ridge. The Charny Ridge is dominated by other hills farther north, Hill 304, Hill 295, Hill 265. The French lines, pushed well beyond these while General Sarrail, in 1915, had charge of the field army based here, were at their farthest 9 miles north of Verdun.

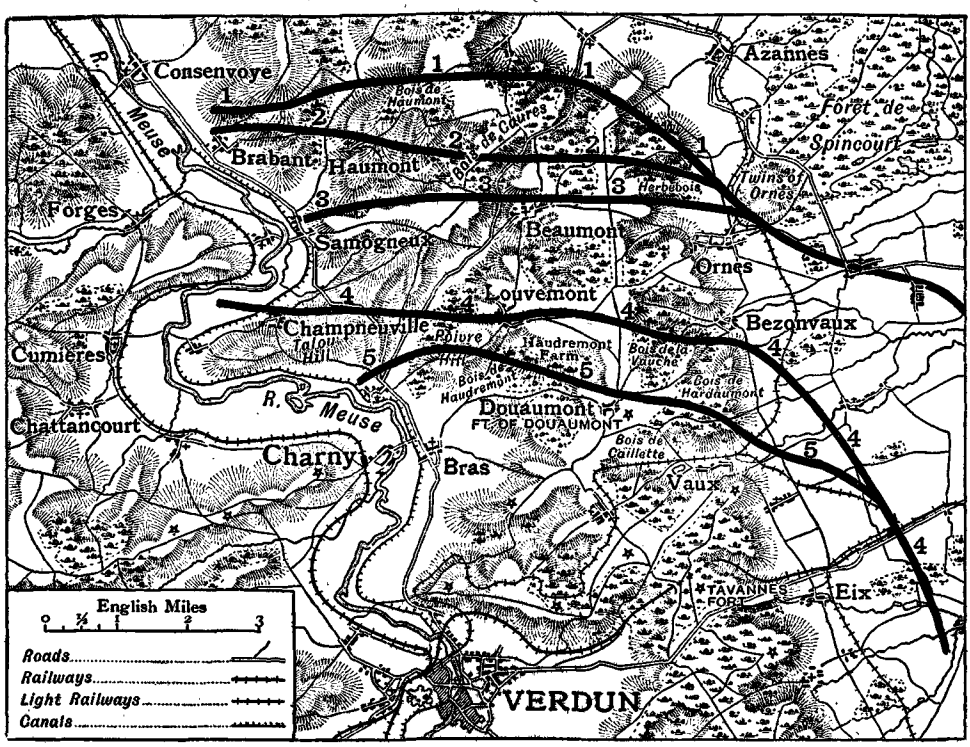
On the eastern side of Verdun the heights of the Meuse rise steeply to a broken table-land, some 5 miles broad, which is cut by ravines hidden by the thick woods of beech and chestnut descending from the plateau. Below the table-land is the flat plain of the Woevre, clayey and water-logged in winter. The line of trenches which ran from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border, after pass-

ing through the Argonne, bent north-eastwards towards Forges, and ran downwards from Forges into the Meuse. After crossing the river the line went through Consenvoye, Brabant-sur-Meuse, and Caures Wood towards Herbebois and Ornes, where it was among the Meuse heights. Leaving the heights it struck south-eastwards through the plain of the Meuse to Fromezey and Fresnes—a salient in the Woevre. Thence coming back to the heights it was continued by the western side of the St. Mihiel salient. From Forges to Fresnes this line defined the outermost defences of Verdun. The first inner line, reading in the same direction, was based, in respect of the eastern side of the Meuse, on Samogneux, Beaumont, Fosses Wood, and Bezonvaux. The second inner line went through Bras, Douaumont (fort), Hardaumont (wood), Vaux (fort), and Eix. Between the first and second of these lines positions had been prepared to reinforce mutually the irregular hills between successive lines of defences, as well as the key heights.

The whole area had been converted into a magnified fortress by labyrinthine communications, concealed gun-positions, and what might perhaps be denominated as the French version of the German Hindenburg lines. The weakness of Verdun as a modern fortress lay solely in the fact that these outer lines had not been pushed out so far eastwards as to render the Verdun bridges over the Meuse, and the supplies brought by rail thither, immune from long-range guns. All the Verdun area east of the river had to be supplied across the bridges. If any attack had proved overwhelming the disaster would have been irreparable to a defending army, which would have been jammed hopelessly against the Meuse without sufficient means of retreat. The French had greatly reduced the possibility of such a debacle by the ingenuity and multiplication of their defences, and had organized a system of motor transport to supplement or supersede railway supply. They could not, however, with their lines situated as they were, deprive the Germans of the heavy-gun positions at Ornes or above Forges, or of their advantages for massing men unperceived in the woods north of the trench lines. Thus, though it was impossible for the Germans to conceal the flow of their forces eastwards, yet they were able, aided by their admirable system, to mass both men and guns for a sudden and very heavy blow in a sector which could hardly have been made impregnable to such an order of attack. The sector they selected embraced the 7 miles of French front from Brabant-sur-Meuse to Herbebois, which was held by 3 divisions of the French Third Army (General Humbert). Against this force the Germans had echeloned 14 divisions. (Von Falkenhayn, in his Memoirs, states that only 17 or 18 divisions were at first available for attack. Nine of these were needed for the main attack on the east of the Meuse, and others had to stand by for relief. There were not enough to attack on both banks at once.).

The first shock of the attack was undertaken by a striking force of 3 army corps on the line from the Bois de Haumont to Uzannes: the corps being the 18th, 3rd (comprising Brandenburg shock-troops), and 15th, with a Bavarian division. From the Bois de Haumont to the river at Consenvoye was the 7th Army Corps, with reserve divisions, and, on the eastern side of the hammer-head, beyond Uzannes towards the Woevre, were the 5th Army Corps, a Bavarian army corps, and a Landwehr division. Each division had less than 2 kilometres of front to attack (von Falkenhayn). But the means of bursting a way through, on which the Germans first relied, was not that of massed divisions, but of massed guns, almost wheel to wheel, and reinforced by the blast from 13-inch and 12-inch guns of position in the woods of Forges and Spincourt, and the heights of Ornes. The supply of ammunition exceeded the quantity which all previous experience seemed to prescribe (von Falkenhayn). The Germans added effectiveness to their surprise by omitting the long preliminary bombardment, and by substituting for it a concentrated burst of fire which lasted but four hours. The French first-line defences melted in the intensity of this outburst as in a lava flow; and no preparation for it, such as in the last few days before the

morning of 21st February, on which it broke forth, could in any way cope with it or suppress its violence. No counter battery work was effective, for the morning was thick and raw, with bad visibility, and the German troops in waiting had nothing to do but to walk over the demolished positions. The French *poilus* who had not been killed, wounded, or isolated, had no other course but to fall back to their support lines.




Map showing the Various Stages in the First Phase of the Attack on Verdun

The German attack on the French lines at Verdun began on the east side of the Meuse at dawn on 21st February, 1916. The most northerly line drawn on the map shows the French position at the time of the German onset. The other lines show the successive positions taken up by the French as they were forced back on 22nd, 23rd, 24th, and 25th February. On Friday, 25th February, the final adjustment of the French line in the first phase of the struggle east of the Meuse took place. It crossed Poivre Hill and Douaumont Plateau.

The support lines had not the durability or powers of resistance of German supporting defences; the French genius does not adapt itself to their construction or maintenance, and the Germans, more methodical in attack as in defence, had left nothing to chance in their arrangements for occupying and consolidating the positions which they had won. They early carried the trench system in the Haumont and Caures woods, though the flanking pillars of Brabant and Herbebois were held against them, and the French expended some gallant lives in a counter-attack which gained a little time for retreat. Retreat was quickly perceived to be inevitable by the French Head-quarters Staff. But another day (22nd) intervened before the first line was definitely abandoned, the French troops selling their lives for the twenty-four hours' respite: and on the 23rd the line Samogneux-Herbebois was adopted as another temporary expedient while preparations were made by the French to draw in their line from the Woevre. On the night of the 23rd–24th the French withdrew their outposts on the Woevre and contracted their line within the limits Champneuville (Meuse), Louvemont, Bezonvaux, and the foot of the heights of the Meuse. This

contracted line could perhaps be held while a stronger inner position was rectified and prepared.

The Germans perceived the importance of pressing on faster, and threw in their men with new rapidity, so that on the 24th they flowed round Beaumont and its encircling woods, and at Louvemont and Bezonvaux were perilously near the inner defensive position chosen by the French. This was sited on the Talou Ridge, inside the bend of the Meuse here, the Poivre Ridge, and then ran south of Louvemont past Haudremont and Douaumont, through the wood of Hardaumont to the edge of the hills at Vaux and its ravine. Its left was pivoted on the Meuse at Vacherauville. On the morning of the 25th the French line was a little in advance of this, and was bent out to protect the two keys of the position, the Poivres Ridge and the Douaumont plateau, in which stood the village, the redoubt, and the fort. The German attack converged on these two points. The attack on the Poivre Ridge failed: it was the less purposeful assault. That on Douaumont pressed up from wood and glen, by path and ravine. The greatest and most persistent sacrifice was made to win past the edge of the plateau: but on the 25th, at any rate, the German efforts could carry them no farther.

This stand of the French was of great service to the defenders and to General Pétain, who had been placed in command, and who still awaited reinforcements. These arrived on the 26th, and were thrown in at the critical stage of the battle for the position of Douaumont. On this position the German assault, narrowed to a 2-mile front, converged with all the weight that could be thrown in, and was pressed in successive waves. The picked troops of the 24th Brandenburg Regiment at last burst their way into the French trenches at the Fort of Douaumont, between the village and the redoubt, and this feat was at once telegraphed all over Europe in the message: " Douaumont, the eastern pillar of the Verdun defences, is solidly in German hands ". It was in German hands, but not solidly, for Pétain's reserves, which had come up during the hard fighting of the day before, were at once sent in, and a perfectly-timed counter-attack, by men of Balfervier's 20th Corps, threw back the Germans and prevented the leak in the defences from being widened by any inrush of Germans through it. This counter-attack marked the end of the first phase of the attack. The limits of success attained by the German surprise were defined, and the attack on the Verdun defences was bound thenceforth to take the form of a siege, in which either combatant knew what the other would attempt, and how far the attempt would carry him. Von Falkenhayn's comment is that violent French counter-attacks began, and the German forward movement in the heights was stayed.

On the 27th and 28th the Germans sought to find a weak point in the contracted French lines on the east side of the Meuse, at Fresnes, Eix, and at Manheulles, on the Woevre front. But the weather and the sodden state of the Woevre roads and fields made assault from that side, at that time, difficult. It is not improbable that the weather which, after a spell of dryness and sunshine, relapsed into winter conditions, was partly responsible for the failure of the Germans to exploit a flank attack on the eastern side of the French defences. While preparing for the development of a new attack on the Douaumont position they transferred guns and ammunition from Spincourt to Montfauçon, on the western side of the Meuse, where, according to von Falkenhayn, they already had some picked assaulting divisions in readiness to test the Verdun defences. West of the Meuse the French lines ran through the Avocourt, Malancourt, and Montfauçon Woods, 2 miles south of the Montfauçon heights. Thence they covered Bethincourt, and the marshy Forges brook, which runs at the foot of the succession of ridges and heights that became household words in 1915 for their connotation of struggles for their possession which went on for weeks. The main ridge, Côte d'Oie, the Corbeaux Wood, nearest the Meuse, the Cumières Wood behind it, the two heights of the Mort Homme (Hills 295 and 265) on the west of the ridge, and Hill 304, south-west of it after

a gap, constituted the first French battle positions, mutually protective. If all were carried the French must fall back on the Charny positions nearer Verdun. We learn from von Falkenhayn that some doubt was felt at this time as to whether the attack should be broken off at Verdun and renewed elsewhere. It was decided to go on. The Crown Prince retained his command, but von Gallwitz was put in charge on the western bank.

A bombardment of four days' duration led the way to the first attack on 6th March, before which the French fell back to their prepared positions behind the Côte d'Oie. The Germans reached Regneville, in the loop of the Meuse, by nightfall, and gained part of the Corbeaux Wood next morning. The struggle swayed backwards and forwards in attacks and counter-attacks till 14th March, with the net result that the French had everywhere fallen back to their second lines, holding tightly to Bethincourt, where the next tactical thrust of the Germans was to be anticipated. Meanwhile, the larger scale attack on the Douaumont sector, east of the Meuse, was in abeyance, and was replaced by persistent small attacks designed to test the French defences and to prevent any crumbling of the German gains.

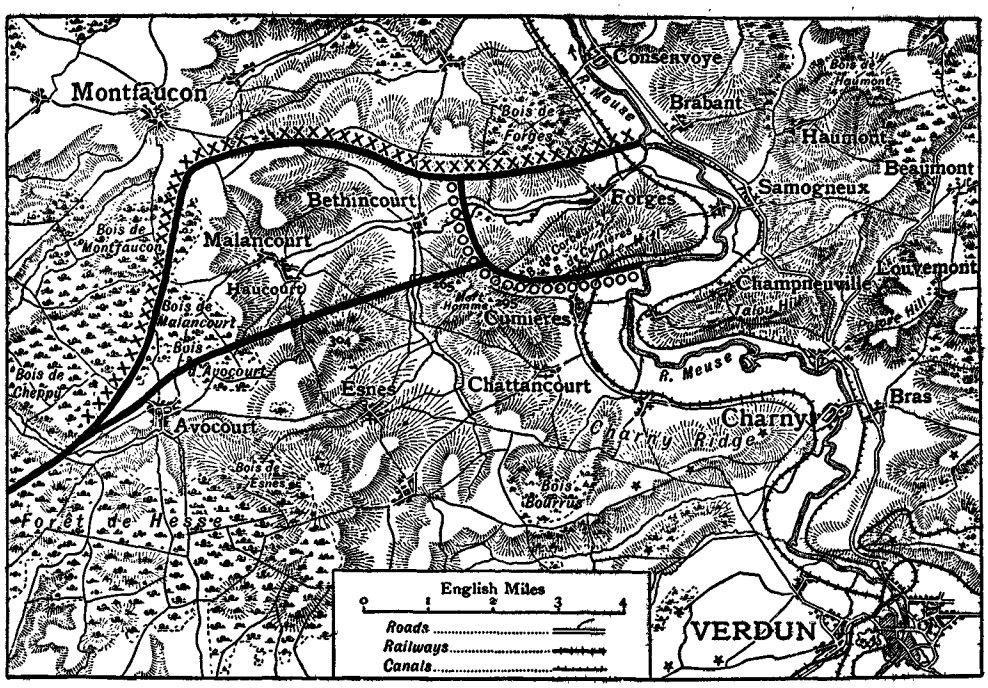
The first attempt to crush in the Côte d'Oie lines was made on 14th March, and took the form of an attempt to seize the western pivot of the defences, the Mort Homme. The main hill (Hill 295) has an outlier (Hill 265). The attack was made on the whole of this position, and, as usual, made a small but perceptible gain at a cost which seemed disproportionate at one point, namely the slopes of Hill 265. The gain was magnified in the German reports, and was not greatly improved by another attack two days later. On that day also an attack on the Vaux sector, on the other side of the Meuse, was repelled. By the middle of March the new character of the German attack became established. And there was no longer any probability of surprise: the French lines were organized for resistance as the German machine was organized for attack: it remained only to be seen whether German persistence and weight could exhaust French elasticity. The Germans reconstituted their forces for the new trial of strength, and brought up what may be called their siege army to 24½ divisions, which, with their attendant artillery, were disposed over a front of 25 miles, or roughly 20,000 men to the mile—a formidable threat. They renewed their attempts on the western defences on 17th March with a three days' bombardment: and on the 20th delivered their first attack, which was the prelude to the assault on Hill 304, towards Avocourt Wood.

Avocourt Wood provided the necessary cover for a massed attack on the hill, which, if taken, would be the first step to outflanking the Mort Homme and the Côte d'Oie defences. The attack of the 20th, skilfully made and reinforced by *flammenwerfers*, took the wood; and made some progress towards Malancourt. On the 28th, after consolidating their position in the wood as well as they could under the harassing French fire, the Germans renewed their attack on Malancourt. General Pétain responded with a counter-attack at Avocourt Wood, driving back the Würtemburgers, who held it, from the edge of the wood and beyond the redoubt which they had constructed within its precincts. Malancourt was less essential as an advance work of Hill 304 than the Avocourt Wood, debouching from which the Germans would have had a comparatively narrow space to cross under concentrated fire; and it was relinquished, together with Haucourt, though not without a struggle. The lines were drawn thus more compactly about Hill 304 in preparation for the next attack on it.

Before this took place on 7th April the Germans made vigorous attempts to improve their position on the eastern side of the Meuse by outflanking, in the direction of Vaux, the Douaumont-Hardaumont positions. General von Mudra had by this time been substituted as commander of the German operations east of the Meuse. The hills, as they face eastwards, are curved like the sections of a tomato, and the ravines between the sections are clothed in trees. It was up these ravines that the German attacks were cleverly and persistently pushed,

often without success, and always with cost, but gradually boring their way to their object. On 2nd April the last of a succession of these attacks got up the roadway between the Hardaumont and Caillette Woods, and captured most of the latter wood. A furious counter-attack ejected them, and both sides lost heavily.

The renewed attack of 7th and 8th April a mile of French trenches was lost, and gave the Germans a footing. On the other flank, towards Cumières, a preliminary success was followed by the loss, due to a French counter-attack, of the ground won. In the French view, as expressed by General Pétain, this attack and its small results marked the end of the first phase of the battle of Verdun. No fresh surprise could be sprung on the




The German Attack on the French Positions west of the Meuse

The most northerly line, marked with XXX's, shows the French and German trenches in contact on 6th March, 1916. The line intersecting this, marked with OOO's, shows the French position taken up under pressure of the German attack on 16th March. This line was afterwards straightened to the position indicated by the addition of the third line in the map running from Avocourt to Mort Homme, and retained thus to 10th April.

on Hill 304 was prefaced by a necessary retirement of the French from Bethincourt, so that the new line ran from Avocourt Wood along the northern slopes of Hill 304 to Forges brook, south of Spur 265, behind the crest of the Côte d'Oie to Cumières on the Meuse. The German attack (8th) embraced the whole of this line. In the Avocourt sector its complete repulse showed the value of Pétain's prior counter-attack on the wood. A frontal attack on the Mort Homme, from the Corbeaux Wood, was held off nearly all day, but towards the close a quarter of defenders, and an Order of the Day by General Pétain emphasized the French view that the German attacks had been "shattered" by the French Second Army.

This was, however, a view far from acceptance by the German's Head-quarters Staff, which was aware that the British armies were not yet ready for effective intervention, and which, having successfully taken the risk of standing on the defensive in 1915, while putting Russia out of action, was prepared to take the risk of expending yet more men in the effort to immobilize

the French before the British were ready. The extraordinary reticence which the French preserved with regard to their losses, and the occasional lapses from confidence of their people—betrayed only by rare Socialist interpellations in the French Chambers—may have led the Germans to exaggerate the losses and underrate the resiliency both of soldiers and civilians. (Von Falkenhayn says the German object was to force a decision before the British were ready.) At any rate, they proceeded, regardless of General Pétain's ratiocination, with preparations for attack on an undiminished scale, and with no palpable alterations of their tactics of laying the axe alternately on either side of the tree, now on the lines west of Verdun, now on the more constricted fortress area to the east of it. Their preparations continued during April, and were made irrespective of various sharp French attacks which had local successes north of Fort Vaux on the one side, and on the northern base of the Mort Homme on the other. The first German reaction made itself apparent on 4th May, when a heavy artillery preparation began, which lasted three days before a renewed attempt to take Hill 304 was made. A triple attack was directed against Hill 287—a spur of Hill 304, against Avocourt Wood, and against the ravine between Hill 304 and the Mort Homme.

Once again the Avocourt Wood attack failed; but progress was made in twelve hours' concentrated fighting in the ravine, and the system of trenches in the northern slopes of Hill 304 had to be ceded. The French fire, however, still dominated the crest, and while Avocourt Wood was held no farther progress could be made here by the Germans. In order to support the necessary flanking operations, two new attacks were made on the wood positions (17th and 18th), and the attack spread from here eastwards till the whole front to the river was under assault, the chief efforts being made at the ravine between Hill 304 and the Mort Homme. At the same time, an effort was made to cut in behind the Mort Homme on the river side. The double assault was supported by a very heavy barrage, under which the French first-line trenches on the river side were swept away, but the Germans could not hold the second line, and their supports were hurled back in the confused retreat from it. The attack on the ravine was more successful, and the wedge already made there was driven in deeper and wider, so that the Mort Homme was no longer the sole possession of the French. The Germans had a holding on it.

While this prolonged attack was in progress the French, under the direction of General Nivelle, a corps commander who had risen from command of a regiment since the beginning of the war, and who had succeeded General Pétain as director of the Verdun defences, launched a surprise counter-attack on the eastern side of the river. The operation was entrusted to General Mangin and the 5th Division, and took the form of a swift and sudden thrust at Douaumont Fort. The attack seized the fort and the trenches to the west of it, but not those to the right, so that the north-eastern corner was never mastered, and thus there never was much prospect that the gain could be held. It was held, however, until the morning of the 24th, and is to be regarded as a tactical manœuvre, the principal purpose of which was to disconcert the German plans. It was probably successful in its effort of exacting more men than it cost. It did not, however, interrupt the renewal of the attack on the Mort Homme line west of the Meuse. On 23rd May one of the major assaults of the long siege laid to these defences began. It was pushed without cessation for six days, in four or five parallel and alternating attacks on the flanks and front of the Mort Homme and its sister buttress, Hill 304. The early history of it in respect of the two main positions repeated that of previous attacks, with the addition that both sides used more men and more ammunition.

Between the Mort Homme and the river it was on the 24th more successful, for the French line was broken at Cumières, and the Germans pushed through as far as Chattancourt. They were fought back step by step by a French counter-attack, and finally, on the 28th–29th, the Germans, bringing

ATTACKING THE VERDUN DEFENCES

Brandenburgers attacking the Fort of Douaumont

up 5 fresh divisions, threw them into a last effort which embraced both the Mort Homme and the Cumières sector. The French second lines near the river were held, and the Cumières territorial gains were small. The Mort Homme, further undermined by the widening of the wedge between it and Hill 304, could no longer be held as an outlier; its crest had to be abandoned, but the French established themselves on its western and southern slopes, and the crest remained a No Man's Land swept by the guns of either side.

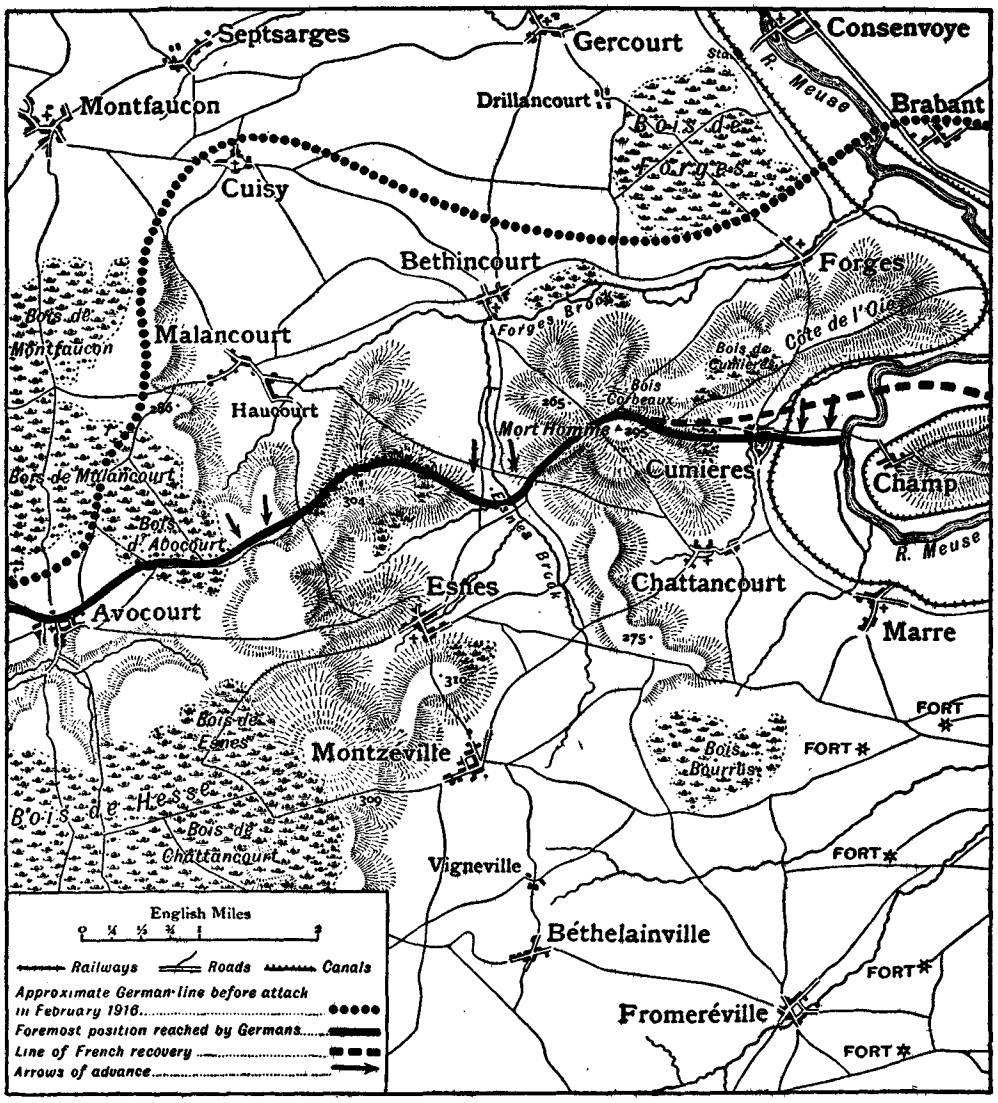
The relinquishment of the Mort Homme marked a stage in the success of the German policy of wearing down the French line before it could be relieved by a counter-thrust elsewhere. While the French were thus pinned, they could only engineer such a counter-thrust by British help. Thus the problem became one of time—which side could endure losses longest? The Germans applied the same test locally. Having now pinned the French to a sleepless defence on the Côte d'Oie positions, they renewed their attempt to eat away the French purchase on the outer lines of the Verdun defences east of the Meuse. Their first tactical step was directed to the capture of Fort Vaux, which was the flanking pillar behind the Douaumont-Louvemont line. The first attack began on 1st June, and spread from Haudemont Wood and the Douaumont plateau to the innermost of the triple spurs on which stands Caillette Wood. Caillette Wood they seized again, and on 2nd June used it as the starting-point for the climb across the nearest ravine to Fort Vaux.

At the same time, having seized the village of Damloup, they sent up an attack across the ravine on the other side of the fort. With very great skill, and very great courage, a remnant of the heavy storming parties got into the fort ditch to the north, and stayed here for four days. Their courage found many parallels among the French defenders, and especially among the tiny garrison of the fort under Major Raynal. Every device was tried to compel their surrender: and the German method of encircling the fort was one which tested the French soldiers' heroism to the utmost, for while the flank attacks were continually fed with fresh infantry, a very heavy artillery barrage, on the southern slopes leading to the fort, prevented any succour from reaching the fort and any possibility of retiring from it. The limit to human endurance was not reached till 6th May, when Major Raynal, and a handful of men, surrendered. The long resistance had enabled the French to withdraw their lines, and consolidate them in a new front drawn from the Froide-Terre Ridge, through the Thiaumont Redoubt, Fleury, Fumin Wood, and Chapitre Wood. It then curved through Chenois Wood and La Laufée Wood, above Damloup. This line was good tactically, but it was not more than an average of 4 miles from the citadel, the last exterior bastions of which were Forts Souville and Tavannes.

A preliminary feeler of the strength of this last line was made on 12th June, and as the result of it Thiaumont Redoubt was perceived to be the key of the position. A tentative attack on it on the 15th was followed on the 18th by the major assault, which was made with the prescribed three parallel thrusts (1) on Ridge 321, (2) on Thiaumont Redoubt, and (3) on Fleury village. This attack, with its developments, is extremely interesting, because it is to be regarded as the last which promised at any moment to win towards the desired goal of Verdun. It lasted a week; it had moments when success in breaking through seemed in sight; it gained Thiaumont, but did not gain Fleury, and throughout its duration the same tale had to be told. The counter-attack, well-timed by the French tacticians, was always made at the time and place to rob the Germans, whose attacks were both persistent and determined, of the fruits of their energy and skill. It was a memorable duel, which ended with the French line bent behind both Fleury and Thiaumont, but still resilient. Before it ended General Nivelle had issued an Army Order asserting that this was the supreme German attack before the great counter-stroke against them matured. He referred, of course, to the operations on either side of the Somme and the Ancre, which were to be undertaken by the British army in conjunction with the French.

But while the French, in spite of their

pre-occupation with Verdun, were yet able to send another army into action to co-operate with Sir Douglas Haig, the Germans asserted themselves capable of dealing with 12th July, after the Somme battle had entered on its second stage, they endeavoured to break out from Fleury along the road passing between the Thiaumont works and Fort

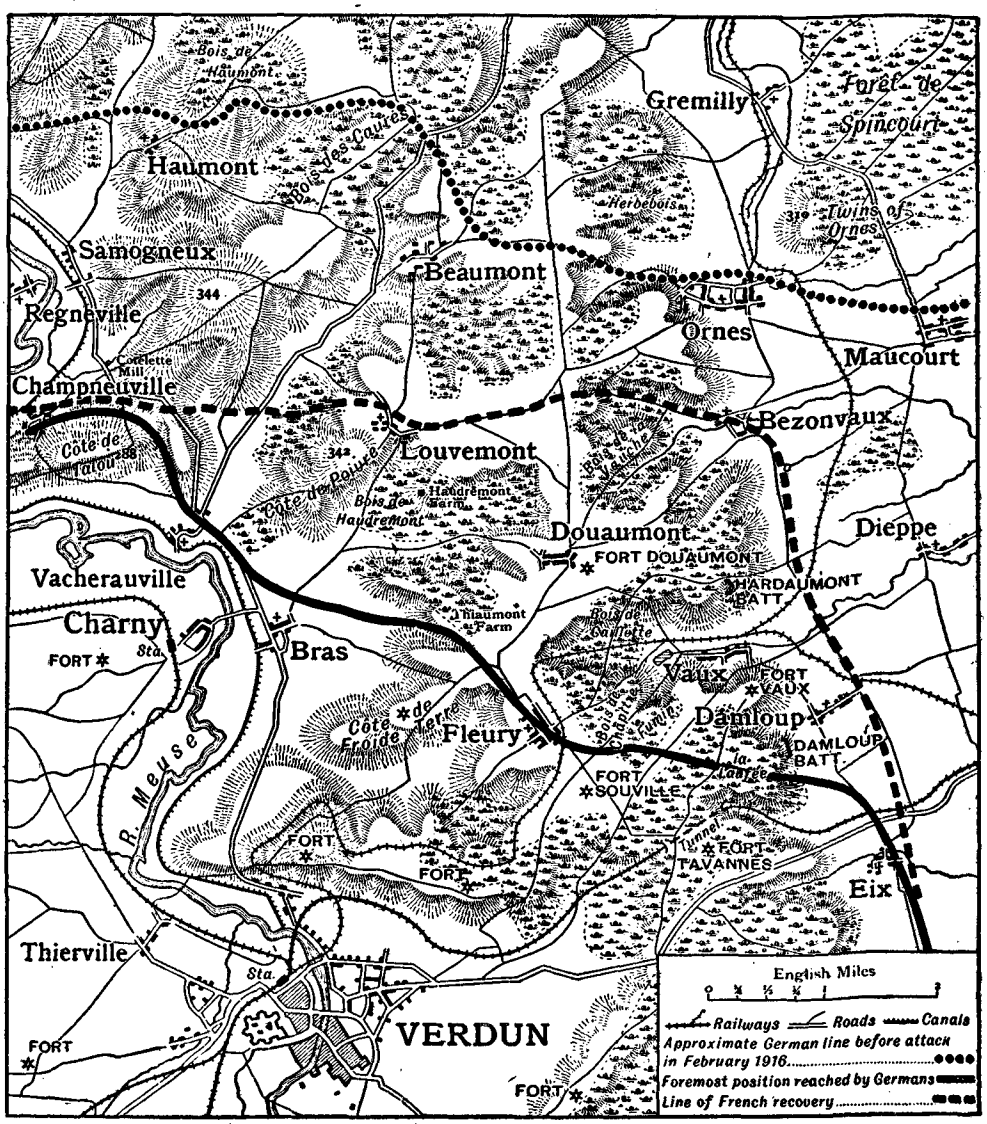



The Mort Homme Area and the Defences on the West Side of the Meuse

The Battles of Verdun, 1916: map—continued on the opposite page—showing approximately the limits of the German advance and the region recaptured by the French by the end of the year

this effort while continuing their own at Verdun. Moreover, though they had not broken through the outer guard of Forts Souville and Tavannes, they had won a good position for striking again; and on 11th and Souville. The attack was stopped, and by the 15th the French were in a position to make a counter-attack. This was entrusted to General Mangin, a general whose reputation as the iron commander of an iron

division was enhanced at Verdun through many months of fighting. The French had, however, neither the men nor the inclination to pay highly for the privilege of thrusting Nivelle's prediction was sound: the character and purpose of the fighting before Verdun had changed, and was not again to relapse into an epoch-making struggle. For




Verdun and its Defences on the East Side of the Meuse

The Battles of Verdun, 1916: map—continued from the opposite page—showing approximately the limits of the German advance and the region recaptured by the French by the end of the year.

the Germans back by mass attacks, and depended on their skill and dash for such successes as they could win.

Fleury and the Thiaumont work changed hands repeatedly in the following weeks, but two months from 18th August Verdun passed almost out of sight. It is possible to say now that the German bid for a decision in 1916 failed, and failed before Verdun. The failure extinguished the influence and posi-

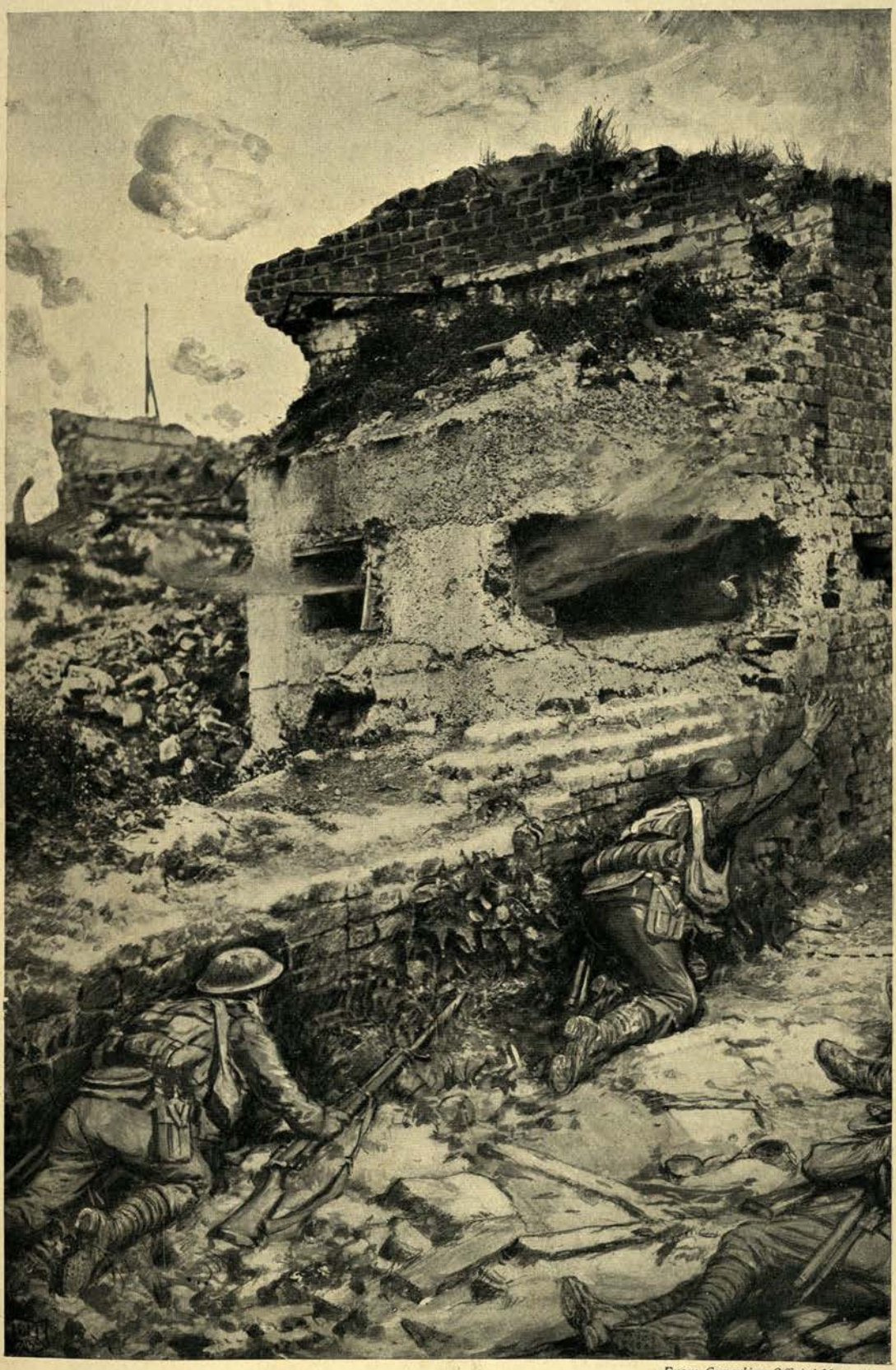
tion of von Falkenhayn, who had conceived and matured the plan, and paved the way for the ascendancy of Hindenburg and Ludendorff in the counsels of the German Great Head-quarters Staff. The trial to which the French had been subjected was nevertheless a very high one; as high as the enduring reputation which the French soldiers and their commanders won in its defence; and though in many a field yet to be fought the genius and indomitability of the French military spirit were again to be exhibited, the wounds of Verdun went some way to cripple the French resources. The German estimate, perhaps to be accepted with reserve, is that, till 17th March, the French had sent in 27 divisions; to 21st of April, 28; to 8th of May, 51; and to middle of June, 70.

There was no sign of exhaustion in the autumn operations there, where General Nivelle was permitted to work out a scheme for the redemption of some of the strongholds that had been lost. The task was congenial to him and to his colleagues and subordinates; and at Verdun schemes of attack were worked out which were reflected in new tactics. One of such methods was the perfecting of the creeping barrage, by which the faultlessness of the French artillery practice enabled them to send a progressive curtain of shell-fire in front of an attack; another was the device, to which the conditions of assault at Verdun lent themselves, of training the units of assaulting columns on ground which was modelled so as to reproduce the actual difficulties to be encountered. Training such as this was given to the attack prepared under the supervision of General Mangin to retake the strong points of the Douaumont and Vaux defences.

General Nivelle had been able by the third week in October to amass a considerable force of heavy artillery. It was to be the surprise of the attack which he had designed, and which General Mangin was to lead, with Generals Lardemelle (Vaux sector), Passaga (Douaumont), and Guyot de Salins (Thiaumont work). On 23rd October the striking force was deployed on a front of 5 miles, from the river to the Bois Chenois, and a feint attack drew a heavy response from the German batteries.

The Germans had still 15 divisions in line between Avocourt Wood and Eix, sufficient for defence, but some of them of inferior quality; the struggle on the Somme had drawn to that area more and more of their best fighting material. Though they anticipated a French attack they were not aware of the precise moment, and were in fact surprised in the fog of the morning of the 24th, when the three-pronged assault burst its way through the Thiaumont work on the left, the Caillette Wood in the centre, and the Damloup Redoubt on the right. The assault had been so carefully rehearsed and perfected in detail that the fog found it at no disadvantage, while the speed at which it was conducted discounted almost entirely the effect of the German barrage, which answered the thunder of Nivelle's heavy and light artillery. The keynote of success was struck by the rapidity with which Guyot de Salins' division swept through the Thiaumont work after encircling it, and did not stop till it had reached the Haudremont quarries, where the German defence of machine-gun posts arrested them. Passaga's division, in the centre, burst through Caillette Wood, and then, according to the pre-arranged plan which had ordered the assault to take place in two bounds, paused to reconstitute themselves for the assault on Fort Douaumont. Passaga's troops were to close in on either side of it, in conjunction with the left wing of Guyot de Salins on their right. The method succeeded; the actual honour of taking the stronghold fell to Major Nicolay's battalion.

On the right of Douaumont, Fort Vaux was thus left largely in the air. It was not, however, to fall with such swiftness as its more famous companion. The progress on the right wing of the French attack had been slower, because the Germans, opining that the French main attack was to be made here, were better prepared to receive it. General Lardemelles' division, which had taken Damloup, was, however, in a strong position for further assault, and though for two days the Germans defended most courageously every machine-gun position, crater, and trench, they were at length encircled by the pushing up of fresh divisions (General



*From Canadian Official Material*

THE GERMAN DEFENCE SYSTEM OF 1917

British troops attacking one of the German concrete gun emplacements

Andlauer) through Fumin Wood, on the western side. On the morning of 2nd November the Germans blew up as much as they could of the fort and left it. Before that date they had fiercely, but unavailingly, counter-attacked at Douaumont, and by 4th November the whole of the Douaumont-Vaux-Damloup line had been recovered by the French. Seven German divisions had been dispossessed by 4 French divisions, perfectly led, and the victory carried with it 6000 German prisoners and a number of guns.

The Nivelle method, which had thus been so remarkably vindicated in this attack, was put into operation a month later in order to push the Germans back from the useful line they occupied and had strongly fortified, from Vacherauville, on the Meuse, over the Côte du Poivre, round the two woods at Haudremont and below the Douaumont Ridge to the outskirts of Vaux village. They held the line with 5 divisions, and were probably under the impression that the French would make no serious attack on them so late in the year. The German divisions were not good, and, as the general in command was subsequently removed, it is to be inferred that his ability was not first-class. For the attack on 14th December General Nivelle again put Mangin in command, giving him the 2 divisions of Generals Passaga and Guyot de Salins, with another veteran division under General du Plessis, and a young division under General Muteau. Muteau's division was entrusted with the simplest task of enveloping Vacherauville, on the Meuse (left); Guyot de Salins' was to advance towards the Côte du Poivre and Louvemont Ridge; De Passaga's and du Plessis' were sent towards Bezonvaux and the Caurières Wood.

The young, untried division did its work without a flaw; de Salins reached the Côte du Poivre in half an hour, and then made good his hold on the vital Louvemont Ridge by very hard fighting. The fighting was progressively harder towards the right wing, where the 2 divisions, though of such fine material, were held up by a salient wedged in their line at Chambrettes Farm, which they first took and then lost. It was not till the 16th that renewed attacks straightened out the line, and consolidated a new French position on the east side of the Meuse, as strong for tactical purposes as that from which they had been driven by the full weight of the German blow ten months before. The gains in this last triumphant vindication of French military ability comprised 11,400 prisoners and 115 guns. Four villages, five forts, many redoubts and trenches, were occupied, and the better part of 6 German divisions were broken up. The victory set the seal on Nivelle's reputation, and was one of the factors which placed him, on Joffre's recommendation, in chief command of the French armies in 1917. Other tasks were found for General Joffre, and General Foch's claims for the moment receded into the background. (Foch, in 1917, was sent to the eastern frontier, and for a time was actually without employment.)

## PART II

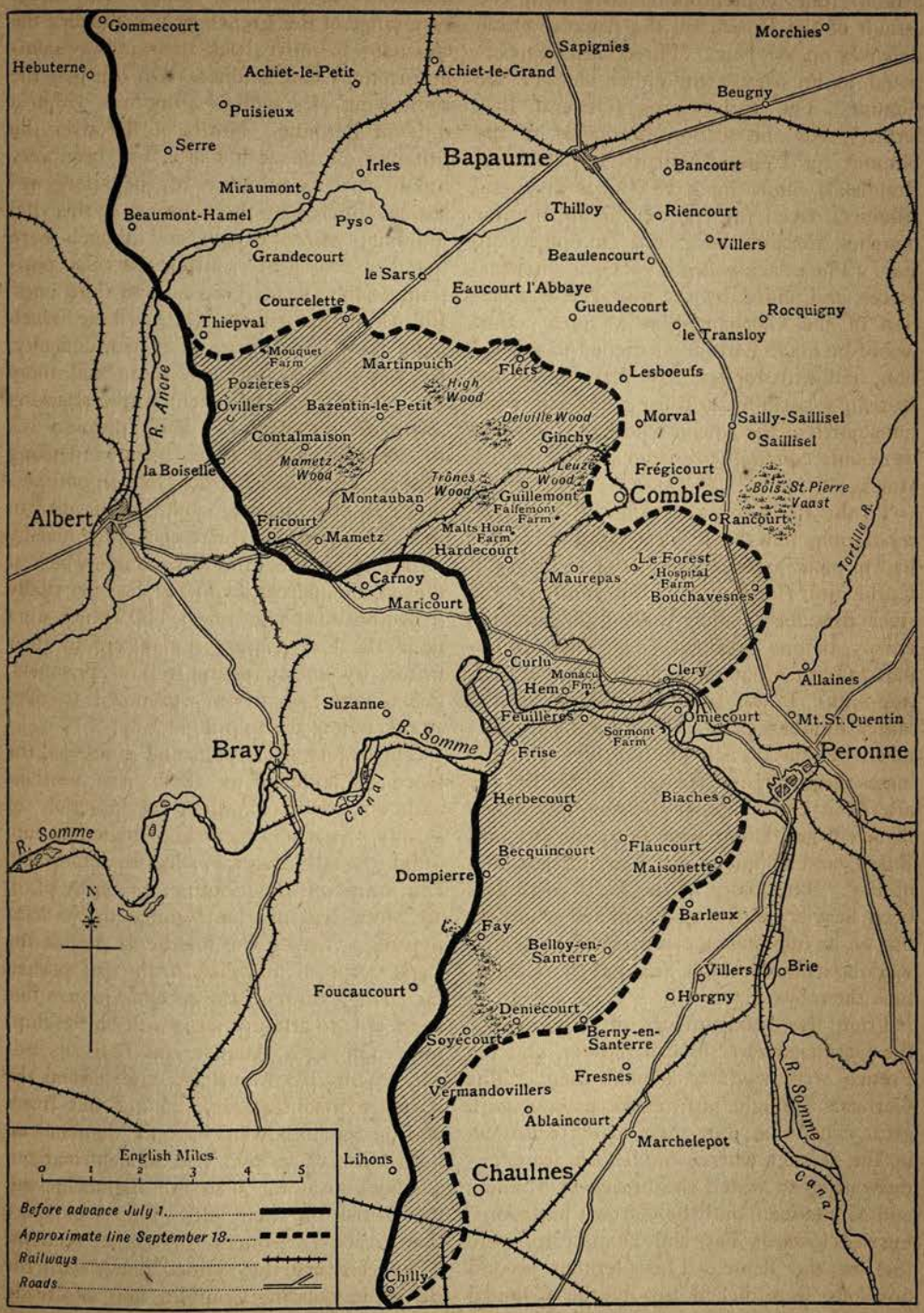
The magnet of Verdun, though it attracted so great a share of the German resources, and kept them there for long after there was a prospect of a great return on the outlay, did not prevent the German Head-quarters Staff from disposing of very strong forces to resist the impact of the British armies on the Somme front; nor, on the other hand, did it distract General Joffre and the French Head-quarters Staff from maintaining two French armies—the Sixth and the Tenth—to second the British push when it was made. The first of these armies was under General Fayolle, and drew from Verdun the famous Paris corps (20th) and 2 other corps, and was placed immediately south of Rawlinson's army. South of Fayolle was the French Tenth Army under General Micheler. Both armies were directed by General Foch. The German general in chief command of the forces opposed to the British was von Below, successor to von Bülow; opposite to Fayolle and Micheler was von Gallwitz (from Verdun). The Crown Prince of Bavaria was the nominal commander of the group. The French Sixth Army came into action on an

8-mile front, contemporaneously with the assault of the British on the Ancre-Somme defences on 1st July. Three corps participated in an assault on either side of the Somme. The 20th Corps (General Balfervier) took the section Maricourt to the Somme; a Colonial corps (1st, General Brandelat), and the 35th Corps (General Allonier), faced the front from the Somme marshes, through Frise and Dompierre, to Fay. The attack was one of Foch's masterpieces, and, aided by the mistaken expectation of the Germans that no great effort would be made here, it succeeded to perfection, and with far less loss than fell on the British, especially at those defensive positions north of the Ancre, where the Germans were only too well prepared for the British attack.

To the Paris corps, which had a veteran reputation, fell the hardest fighting, and it had to pause outside the fortified villages of Curlu and Hardecourt. But south of the river Brandelat's men walked through the enemy before breakfast, capturing unprepared German battalions and officers in their dug-outs. It was from this region that the larger number came of the 6000 prisoners taken by the French on 1st July; and the losses here were extremely light. By the afternoon the Colonial division had taken three villages, Dompierre, Becquincourt, and Bussu; and Allonier's corps was in possession of Fay. The losses of the Paris corps had been heavier, but it had inflicted a greater one on its opponents, chiefly Bavarians, and, working its way round Curlu and Hardecourt, took them next day.

From the disadvantages of this surprise the Germans were slow to recover, and the French were swift to exploit them. The Germans brought up reinforcements with great expedition, but their hands were full in the section where the British were endeavouring to widen the breach at Mametz and Montauban, and the German battalions, hurried towards Fay and Dompierre, were fuel to the flame. The German second positions were licked up by the Colonial corps and Allonier's men on 2nd July, and the latter had a hold on Estrées by 5th July. The menace of their advance to the neighbourhood of Péronne, which was within easy range of the French 75's, compelled the Germans to move back their railway communications to Chaulnes. On 9th July the right wing of Fayolle's army was within a mile of Péronne. North of the river the progress of the 20th Corps had been very much slower—evidence of the strong resistance offered by the Germans at this vital junction, where British and French were together aiming at securing the ridge positions of the German second and third lines. But while von Gallwitz, who faced the French here, maintained his position with difficulty, he was obliged to cede more and more ground to the 2 French corps attacking south of the Somme. Their purpose was to advance so far as to bring a flanking artillery fire to bear on the German positions north of the Somme. But, owing alike to the configuration of the river and the marshy character of the ground through which it flowed, this threat could not become vitally dangerous for some time. The French were none the less reaping the reward of their tactics by an increasing roll of prisoners, the number of whom amounted to over 12,000 before the middle of July.

Thenceforward, for some time, as the Germans stiffened in their new positions and got their excellent organization of supply, both of men and material, into order, the advantages of surprise diminished, and south of the Somme, as north of it, advances had to be purchased by hard fighting. Yet by the middle of August the Paris corps of Fayolle's army had pushed far enough through the second German line to be able to attempt an assault on the third line. On 12th August the Parisians advanced towards Maurepas, and beyond the southern road to Cléry, on a 4-mile front, and on the 16th were beyond Maurepas on both sides of it, and had straightened out a salient so as to be in full alignment with the British on their left. They took more than 1000 prisoners in these sections. Thenceforward they joined hands with the British in isolating Combles, and, as already recorded, forced their way steadily, though with increasing difficulty, past the narrow avenue of approach by St. Pierre Vaast Wood




The Allied Battle-field on the Somme: map showing approximately by the shaded area the Franco-British gains from 1st July to 18th September, 1916

towards the heights of Sailly and Saillisel. But, true to Foch's method (which, unfortunately for the duration of the war, did not have the opportunity for operations on the grand scale till the summer of 1918), while the Germans were engaged in parrying the advance of the British Fourth and French Sixth Armies, a new area of combat was opened by General Micheler's Tenth Army, farther south than Fayolle. On 5th September it attacked on a front of 12 miles from Barleux to Chaulnes. It carried 3 miles of German positions between Vermandovillers and Chilly, and took 3000 prisoners.

While the Germans were pondering this new threat to their railway communications at Chaulnes, Foch sent Fayolle forward next day on both sides of the Somme and captured the ridge which runs from Bouchavesnes to Cléry on the Somme, as well as the village of Omiecourt.[1] The threat to Péronne on both sides of the river was thus accentuated. As before, and as happened throughout the later stages of the Somme battle, the Germans had a tight enough grip on their organization to close it up against the new effort, and, though their counter-attacks from 6th to 8th September against the whole Allied line from Thiepval to Chilly won back no ground, it prevented any swift or decisive widening of the breaches made. They could not, however, prevent a continual crumbling, and it must always remain a possible surmise that, had the weather lasted, and had 1916 been favoured with the September and October summers of St. Martin and St. Luke, the crumbling, accompanied as it was by the decay of *moral* among German troops, who had been fighting hard without tangible results for six months, might have been disastrous. The idea remains, however, a surmise, and it is certain that the Germans attained their maxim of *Durchalten*—and held out. The French, however, especially near the Somme, pushed them hard. On 13th September the Sixth Army took Bouchavesnes; progressing still farther towards Péronne on its northern side, on 17th and 18th September the fortified villages of Vermandovillers, Deniecourt, and Berny, on the high ground above Barleux, were captured, and Barleux itself became marked for advance. Yet farther advance on Barleux, south of the Somme, as on Sailly-Saillisel, on the north, became tentative as the weather worsened.

If the Sailly-Saillisel positions could have been carried it would have been possible to work round the Péronne defences from the north; and the same observation as to outflanking applies to Barleux, with respect to positions south of Péronne. Finally, on 4th October and 8th October, the French seized part of the road which runs through Sailly to Péronne, and on the 16th took the village. Saillisel they did not reach, but they maintained a position which prevented the Germans from debouching from St. Pierre Vaast Wood. This statement fairly represents the profit and loss account of the French share in the Somme battle at the ridges north of the river. On the river itself Fayolle pushed forwards from Bouchavesnes (15th) in conjunction with a movement of Micheler, whose centre had gained a hold on Ablaincourt (10th), and who now advanced north-east of it with a new gain of prisoners. The end of the autumn campaign of 1916 showed the French with a considerable gain of territory, with 70,000 prisoners—the larger number of them gained in the hardly intermitted attacks south of the Somme—and threatening (with the British) the flank of the ridge north of the Somme, as well as Péronne south of it. They were approaching Mt. St. Quentin, which defends Péronne, from the north, and the Villers Carbonnel ridge, which protects it on the south.

[1] Not to be confused with Omiecourt, east of Chaulnes.

# CHAPTER XI

## THE BRITISH CAMPAIGN IN THE WEST IN 1917

If the operations of the Allied armies in the west during 1916 are surveyed as a whole, they present the aspect of a force which is relatively quiescent on the larger part of the front for half the year, and during the second half of the year only undertakes offensive operations jointly over one eighth of the front. These joint operations involve 2 British armies and 2 French armies. If, again, these joint operations are more closely examined it will be seen that the actions of 2 British armies — Fifth and Fourth — directed by Sir Douglas Haig, and the 2 French armies—Sixth and Tenth—directed by General Foch, are interdependent, rather than joint. Finally, it will be observed that in the autumn of 1916 Foch was moving his 2 armies in an anticipation of the manner in which he handled the whole of the combined forces in the autumn of 1918, when, after many struggles, a genuine sole command was in operation, and the Generalissimo could play with eight or ten armies as on the keys of a piano, striking with one or with two, when the others were temporarily quiescent—never keeping on one note too long, but never allowing the tune to cease.

This unity of command was never in operation till 1918, and it was perhaps not possible in 1916, for the reason that a condition of its existence was that all the armies under the control of the supreme commander should be ready to move at his word. The British armies were not ready, as Sir Douglas Haig makes clear, till July, 1916. They were then moved by an independent Commander-in-Chief, and though there was (as constantly asserted) complete accord between the British and French commands and constant collaboration, yet that was not the same thing as unity of command; and its effects were not the same. It is a reasonable assumption that if Foch, or some one else of Foch's ability, had been able to handle the 4 armies—British and French—which took part in the Battle of the Somme as one instrument, then better results might have been obtained.

The point need not be laboured; but it is necessary to point out that, while there seemed to be in the autumn of 1916 some approach to this arrangement, it sank out of sight again in 1917, when, partly owing to political causes, and partly to that jealousy which is rarely absent in armies during long wars, a change was made in the French High Command, Joffre retiring, Foch being retired temporarily to the background, and General Nivelle, who as a corps commander had done so extraordinarily well at Verdun, being put over the heads both of Foch and Pétain. Nivelle was a fine soldier; his failure as Commander-in-Chief was that his ideas were in advance of his means. It need only be said here that he constructed an optimistic plan of campaign for the French armies in 1917, and that, before it broke down, the British Commander-in-Chief's dispositions were required in some respects to conform to it. Sir Douglas Haig, though he had his doubts about the soundness of Nivelle's plan, did conform to it. He had proposed to make his chief effort in the Ypres sector. In brief, the British strategy aimed at the freeing of the Channel ports, and the possibility thereafter of undertaking joint operations with the fleet which would place the whole weight of Great Britain on the German flank in Belgium. This ideal differed entirely from the French strategic conception, which was always to strike at the German centre, and by dividing their western force into two halves, each fed by different railway supply systems, to open up an opportunity of dealing with the halves separately. The French plan won the support of the Allied Council. Sir Douglas Haig loyally did his share to make it a success. It was helped, or perhaps one should say that the British plan was frustrated, by two occurrences outside the western area of hostilities. The first was the Russian Revolution, which disposed of any prospect of

Russian military aid—it had in effect disappeared in 1916—and the second was the inability of the Italian armies to get ready in time to assail the Austro-Hungarian armies on the Isonzo. In a sentence, there was less unity of command among the Allies in 1917 than at any time since Italy entered the war in 1915, though, owing to the German submarine campaign, there was more need for it.

The winter of 1916–17 was spent by the British forces aligned on either side of the Ancre in improving the positions there. The last embers of the Battle of the Somme were two attempts to seize the Butte de Warlencourt (5th November), which was part of the larger endeavour to better the Allied position on the trunk roads leading to Bapaume. The attempt was gallant, but unsuccessful. No other operations except those of trench-raiding were imposed on the forces till January, when harder weather allowed the pressure to be made more continuous, especially near Beaucourt and Beaumont-Hamel. On 3rd–4th and 6th February the pressure became more effective, the counter-attacks less determined; and on 7th February the cession of Grandecourt by the Germans without a struggle was the first symptom that the resistance to the British on the Ancre was no longer to be maintained on the scale of 1916. It presently became evident that not merely were the Germans prepared to abandon the Ancre positions, but that they contemplated retirement on a larger scale. Miraumont, and Petit Miraumont were captured by the British after a brief struggle (24th February); Serre was taken without a struggle at all (25th February); Le Bargue, Puisieux—defended only by stubborn machine-gun detachments prepared to sell their lives—and Gommecourt (27th February), were all quickly captured. By the end of February the Germans had fallen back to the positions of the Le-Transloy-Loupart line, with the fortified Irles village forming a salient in it. Irles fell to a well-planned assault on 10th March, and with it went the practicability of the Germans holding any longer this forward line. Its fall was the prelude to the larger withdrawal to that Hindenburg line which had been in preparation all the winter.

The first symptom of the general withdrawal was discovered on 14th March, when portions of St. Pierre Vaast Wood, which had held up the French attacks on the Sailly-Sallisel heights so effectually, were found untenanted. By 17th March the whole British front from Roye to Arras was set in motion, and the advance was made with little resistance though Vaux Wood and Achiet-le-Grand to Chaulnes and Bapaume, while the French took Roye. The Germans in their retreat ruined everything systematically, from fruit-trees and farmhouses to the Hôtel de Ville at Péronne. On 21st–22nd March the British Fifth and Fourth Armies had pushed east of Péronne, captured Roisel railway junction (24th March), and Beaumetz-les-Cambrai, at which the Germans, however, made five counter-attacks, a sign that the advancing armies were approaching the German forward position on the new line. By 2nd April the Fifth Army was within 2 miles of St. Quentin, and the general line was firmly established through Selency, Epehy, Havrincourt Wood, Royalcourt, Doigny, Mercatel, Beaurains; the Fourth Army took Ronssoy and Lempire (5th and 6th April).

While the British armies were pushing towards the Cambrai-St. Quentin line, the French were moving on a 30-mile front from the north of the Upper Somme to the south of the Oise, towards the new German line from St. Quentin behind Soissons, in front of the St. Gobain plateau. Ham was occupied by the French (19th March); Crouy and Tergnier, the crossings of the St. Crozat Canal (22nd), the Ailette river, and the lower part of the forest of Coucy. Towards the Chemin des Dames the French were able, as their guns came up, to drive the Germans back on Vauxaillon and Laffaux (1st April), and on 3rd April were astride of the Upper Somme, south-west of St. Quentin, and in possession of Orvilliers and Moy. Behind this line, as it extended to Rheims, General Nivelle matured, as well as he could under the changed conditions, his preparations for the great French attack towards Laon. How gravely his plans were prejudiced by the retreat only appeared subsequently.

The Siegfried line, a part of the so-called Hindenburg defences to which the Germans had been withdrawn, was a well-known strategic position; its novelty consisted only in the elaboration of fortification which the Germans had conferred upon it, though another novelty was imparted by the systematic denundation of country by which they had made approach to it more arduous. The line, geographically, extended from the west of Douai and Cambrai to St. Quentin, and thence to the Laon-La Fère position. The Laon-La Fère position was the southern bastion of the line; the Vimy Ridge, north-east of Arras, the northern dominating height. There are three historical military routes by which an army marches through the northern defences of France. The westernmost is along the valley of the Scarpe, which Douai blocks; the second is along the valley of the Scheldt, on which stands Cambrai, the hub of roads and railways; the third is the valley of the Sambre, where St. Quentin and La Fère act as guardians. The La Fère-Laon position was to prove impregnable to General Nivelle. It was the southern bastion of the fortress line which the Germans drew from Drocourt to Quéant, thence to St. Quentin, and beyond it eastwards. The Vimy Ridge was the north-western pillar. Sir Douglas Haig in attacking this, was not, however, considering the possibility that the British, at that time, were concerned in breaking the Hindenburg line.

In Sir Douglas Haig's original plan of campaign for 1917 he had intended to make the attack on the Arras front the preliminary to the main operations farther north. This attack might, had the Germans not decided to evacuate their undermined positions on the Ancre, have captured, by outflanking, any of their forces which held on too long; but the reasons for its prosecution remained unchanged, and the plans which Sir Douglas Haig had made for it fitted in very well with the French requirements that the British should engage the German attention while General Nivelle developed his great attack from Soissons to Rheims. The preparations for the Arras attack had been extremely minute and had lasted months, a circumstance which was necessitated by the exiguous demands of fighting which was to all intents and purposes that of storming fortress fronts, and which must be borne in mind in considering the length of time that was occupied by an army, or an operation, in getting under way. The experience of 1917, as of previous years, showed that attacks conducted in a hurry usually ended in quick disaster. For the Arras operations railways and roads, huts and water-supply, mining and tunnelling, were a preliminary necessity, and all had to be constructed with the same labour as before the Battle of the Somme.

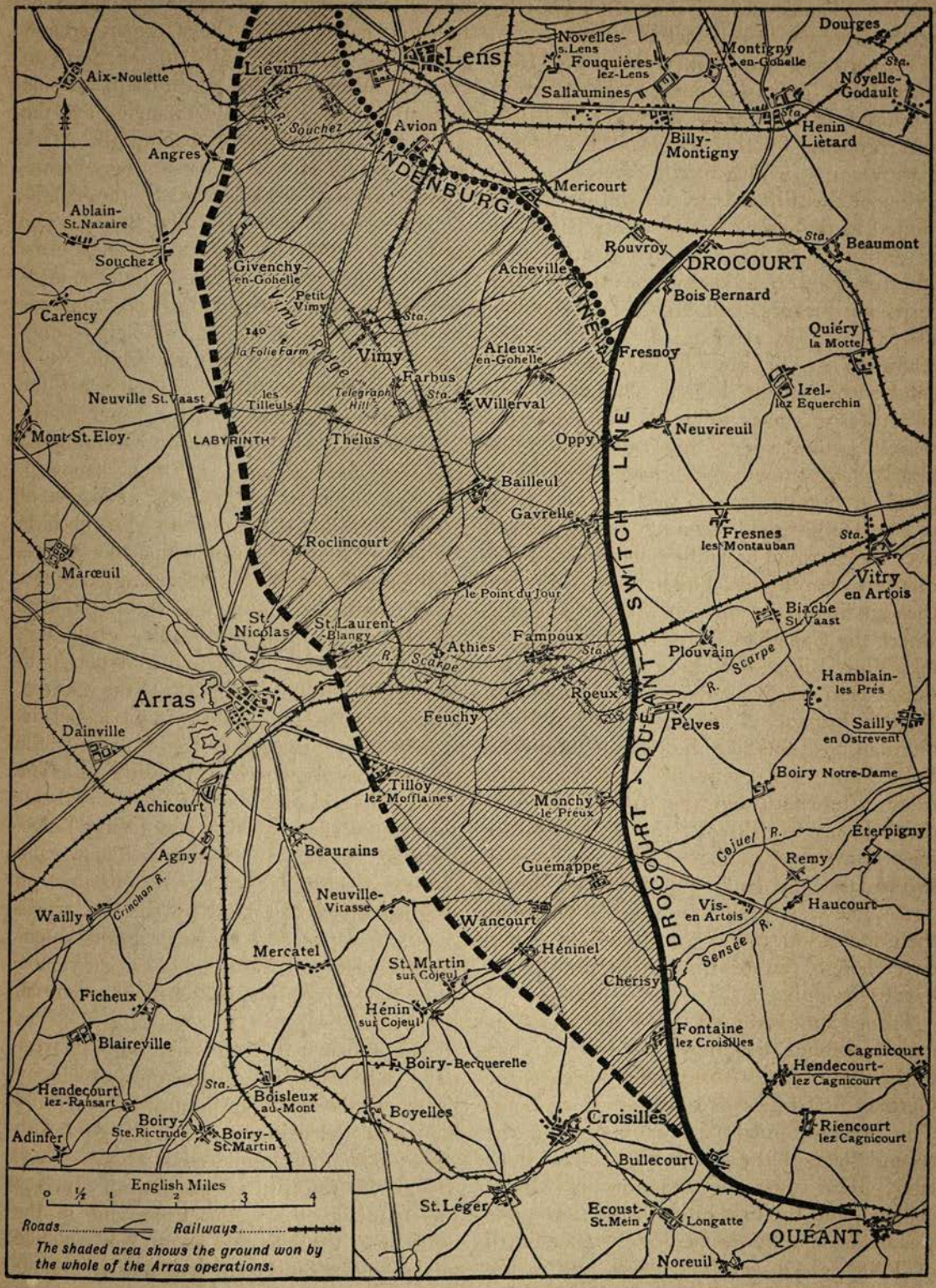
Before the German fortress front of 15 miles from Croissilles to Givenchy, a counter-fortress front had to be constructed before the attack was joined. These 15 miles included 4 or 5 miles of the northern end of the Siegfried (or Hindenburg) line, which the Germans had constructed as a counter-defence to the new style of siege-operations to which they had been subjected in 1916. Farther north, the original German defences were much the same as those captured with such toil in the Somme battle, and comprised three trench systems which were joined up so as to make a defensive belt of country 2 to 5 miles in depth. Behind them by 3 to 6 miles a new line of resistance, from Drocourt to Quéant, joined the Hindenburg line at the latter place. There was but one way of reducing these defences by preliminary bombardment, and that was by co-operation with aeroplane observation. Although no such thing as absolute supremacy in the air was attained by either side during the war, the British aeroplanes were at this time in a high state of efficiency, and after a period of heavy fighting succeeded in establishing a local superiority which gave the British artillery comparative immunity, and enabled it to proceed more effectively with its work of destroying the German defences. The methodical bombardment for this purpose extended for three weeks before the date of the attack (9th April), and was accompanied by gas-attacks, night-raiding, and wire-cutting expeditions. It might in general be said that the mechanical side of the attack had greatly increased in ingenuity, intensity, and in the number of its devices; the period

of preparation was longer; the bombardment heavier. Tanks, slowly increasing in efficiency, were used in the actual attack.

Two armies—the First (General Sir H. S. Horne) and Third (General E. H. Allenby) —unused in the main operation of 1916, were prepared for this action. Allenby had 4 army corps, with a fifth in reserve. The action of the First Army on 9th April was limited to the attack on the Vimy Ridge, to be entrusted to the Canadian Corps; but other troops were to extend the attack of this corps northwards, and General Horne had also a corps in reserve. It was planned, according to the new French method inculcated by Nivelle, to make shock advances in successive stages, so as to consolidate the assault before succeeding obstacles. The first stage of the advance, made after a most effective bombardment, and on the heels of a perfectly-timed creeping barrage, flowed over the German first-line defences in three-quarters of an hour. Only at one point, and that an important one on the extreme left, where the Canadian Corps had been sent to take Vimy Ridge, was there effective opposition. Here the Canadian division, with an English brigade at its centre, overran the German positions like the rest, including La Folie Farm, and eventually took the whole ridge, after hard fighting, from Commandant's House to Hill 145. But at Hill 145 the most northerly Canadian division had a very severe task, and could not force the enemy out. They lost heavily and had to postpone their attack on the crest till the following day, though the result of that attack was hardly in doubt.

From Vimy Ridge to the Scarpe the German resistance was more determined than to the north of it. As a whole, however, the German first line was captured in an hour. The predetermined pause for aligning the second stage of the attack followed an hour later. The resistance was now less disorganized, and the first hitch in the time-table was occasioned by the fierce resistance north of Tilloy, at Observation Ridge, and in the plexus of defences at Railway Triangle. The Scottish and North Country troops north of the Scarpe had had to break down a stinging opposition of machine-gun fire at Roclincourt. They had paid a high price in doing so. But by noon, six and a half hours of fighting had yielded the German second lines from La Folie Farm in the north to Neuville Vitasse in the south (with the sole exception of the Railway Triangle), and the artillery was moving up behind the attack to new positions. This pre-arranged movement had been disconcerted by the lengthened resistance of Observation Ridge. The little grit which gets into the best of plans began thenceforth to take effect. The artillery-fire on the German third positions was no longer dominating; it even left swathes of wire uncut, and it was not prohibitive of German counter-attacks. Nevertheless, the infantry, persuaded of victory, and flinching hardly at all from losses, accomplished a great deal in spite of their handicap. Scottish troops bore down the resistance of Railway Triangle, and with this obstacle removed, the division of which they were a part got through Feuchy, repulsing a counter-attack, and piercing along a short section to the German third line. They could not, however, widen the breach and get in to Monchy-le-Preux. North of the Scarpe, although Hill 145, at the extreme left of the attack, was not completely subdued, the success was elsewhere very gratifying. The Canadians and their supports had dug themselves in on the eastern slopes of Vimy Ridge. Farther south, St. Laurent Blangy and Athies village were captured, and then an English division, taking up the task which Scottish troops had begun, captured Fampoux village and the neighbouring redoubt, thus making another breach in the German third line.

The attack had been made on a showery day. The weather broke into squalls of heavy wind, snow, and rain next day, and hampered the bringing up of the guns with which to hammer home the first blow. Thus, though the uncaptured position of Hill 145 was made good by the Canadians in the north, and the gap at Feuchy was widened in the south, the German defensive organization snatched an opportunity to recover, and, in the Monchy-le-Preux directions the expected advantages were not fully reaped. The outskirts of that village were reached,




The Battle-field of Arras: map showing approximately (by the shaded portion) the ground won by the British armies up to the Hindenburg Line, and its switch-line between Drocourt and Quéant, in the Battle of Arras

but the German machine-gun fire from the fortified villages of Heninel, Wancourt, and Guémappe exacted a heavy toll of the advance. The English and Scottish divisions struggled hard against the severe handicap of an artillery support impotent to subdue the machine-gun. The 11th of April witnessed a repetition of this hard and costly battering of a protected stronghold. Monchy-le-Preux was, indeed, taken by two infantry brigades which were led into the village by Tanks, but everywhere else the British rifle, insufficiently aided by artillery, was unable to mount and hold forward slopes criss-crossed by machine-gun fire. An attempt was made to divert the attention of the Germans by an attack on their front farther south. Australians and West Riding battalions were sent forward at dawn in the neighbourhood of Bullecourt. The enterprise was not a fortunate one. The Tanks which preceded the Australians began well, and aided by them the infantry most skilfully and courageously burst their way as far as Riencourt, but several of the new experimental weapons were shot to pieces or foundered, and the Australians extricated themselves from an untenable position with severe losses and a long-lasting distrust of Tanks.

It had been hoped that by this attack the possibility of enabling the Third and Fifth Armies to join hands beyond the German third line would be achieved; but the undiminished resistance at Heninel and Wancourt prevented the consummation of this hope. It was not till the 12th, when several batteries of heavy guns and howitzers could be got up to bear on these village strongholds, that with their aid the infantry were able to take them. Their capture, together with a mile and a half of the Hindenburg line south of the Cojuel River, represented the sum of the position won south of the Scarpe by the Arras attack. Immediately north of the Scarpe a long-contested duel about Roeux began, but on the outside left the completion of the capture of the valuable Vimy Ridge was accomplished by the capture of the subsidiary hill positions, the " Pimple " and the Bois-en-Hache, on either side of the Souchez River. The importance of this capture by 12th April was far-reaching. It put an end to the German prospects of a remunerative counter-attack, and decided their General Staff on withdrawal from an area where, while the British held the Vimy Ridge, their defence would be conducted at a disadvantage. The possession of the Vimy Ridge, which was never abandoned, was one of the most important factors in stemming the German onslaught in 1918, when the Third Army, entrenched in the Vimy-Arras positions, obliterated the German attack which was to widen the breach made between St. Quentin and Cambrai by the defeat of General Gough's Fifth Army. Ludendorff in his Memoirs admits that he had not the wherewithal to take Vimy Ridge and attack Gough at the same time.

The immediate advantages of the victory of 9th–12th April were perceived in the withdrawal of the Germans on the 13th and 14th from Givenchy-en-Gohelle, Angres, Vimy and Petit Vimy, Willerval, and Liévin. The German retreat was hurried, and left much material behind it. But in the southern sectors of the British attack there was no such exploitation of the Third Army's gains. The troops had fought their way fanwise through the breach they had made till they reached Fontaine-les-Croisilles; the positions at Heninel and Wancourt were improved; but at Monchy-le-Preux, which, after a long and bitter struggle, was left in British hands, the vehemence of the German counter-attacks was evidence that no further advance was to be expected in that direction. The operation as a whole had reached the peak of maximum productiveness for expenditure, and the advantages to be derived from its further prosecution would diminish with the increasing vigour of German resistance. It had, however, yielded a good profit on its original outlay of lives, munitions and energy. In six days' fighting the British front had rolled 4 miles farther east, securing a number of valuable positions, and capturing some 13,000 prisoners and 200 guns—the most considerable success as the result of one action that British troops had yet secured against the enemy. Moreover, the German losses, in endeavouring to close

the Feuchy gap, had been heavy, and so far as Sir Douglas Haig's plans were concerned, it would have suited him best to break off the action altogether at this point, and transfer the bulk of his striking forces to Flanders at once in order to put the favoured British plan into action.

But on the 16th of April General Nivelle's great attack was launched in Champagne, and in order to give to it the best possible opportunity, the British commander was asked to carry on at Arras with the object of diverting German reserves. The attack was therefore resumed (23rd April) on a 9-mile front, from Gavrelle to Croisilles, and was an expensive business. Good progress was made at first. Chérisy was captured; Scottish troops pushed through Guémappe; other British troops took Infantry Hill (well named) beyond Monchy-le-Preux. Roeux station and wood yielded ground to hard fighters; a British Naval Division captured Gavrelle. But the altered tactical situation became at once visible in the immediate German reaction, which was pushed with the utmost determination by the enemy. The Germans lost heavily, it is true, but Guémappe was taken by them, and very fierce fighting throughout the 23rd and 24th at Roeux, Gavrelle, and Guémappe ensued before the British could lay claim to these places. The operations may be said to have been a British victory; points were won and 3000 prisoners taken; Sir Douglas Haig remarks in his dispatch on the testimony to the losses suffered by the Germans in their obstinate resistance. But our own losses were also high, and the character of the German counter-attacks gave clear warning that further pressure could only be exerted here at a cost which the British Commander-in-Chief was, and should have been, unwilling to pay.

It was certain by this time that whatever the British did here would not contribute to the success of the French movement in Champagne. Nevertheless, in order to help Nivelle to convert what had been an extremely costly offensive into a capital gain, the British Commander-in-Chief agreed to the continuance of his movements at Arras till the French had at any rate made good their footing on the Chemin-des-Dames, which was the principal object of their attack, though it had been hoped that it would be but the first step towards Laon and the great lateral railway running through that centre. Consequently, two more attacks on a considerable if not on the greatest scale were delivered by the Third Army (28th April), and by the First, Third, and Fifth Armies (3rd May). The first of these attacks was delivered on an 8-miles front north of Monchy-le-Preux. No advance in depth was projected, though a deceptive width was given to the attack by subsidiary thrusts both north and south of it. In spite of the intention to limit the scope of the assault, the fighting went on for two days. The Canadians took Arleux-en-Gohelle, English troops pushed forward near Oppy and between Monchy-le-Preux and the Scarpe, but the fighting was hand-to-hand—one should perhaps say bomb-to-bomb—and the most satisfactory feature of the engagement from the point of view of its tactical intention was the volume of the counter-attacks which it elicited from the Germans. Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch allows it to be inferred that the Germans lost heavily in these counter-attacks. They certainly lost 1000 prisoners.

The second attack on 5th May, which was twice the width, but which also had no distinct objective before it, embraced Fresnoy (First Army), Fontaine-les-Croisilles (Third) Army), and a stretch of the Hindenburg line near Bullecourt (Fifth Army). The energy of the assault was sufficient to carry Canadians, English, Scottish, and Australians into the enemy's first positions over a length of 16 miles. The most striking incidents of it were the Canadian exploit at Fresnoy, where Germans were found massed for an attack which was thus broken up before it was delivered; and the Australian revenge at Bullecourt for the disastrous advance of 11th April. The Australians worked their way forward very cleverly east of Bullecourt, and, outflanking a forward Prussian battalion, forced it back on its own depths of wire, where it could neither retreat nor advance, and was shot to pieces. Elsewhere East Anglian troops took Cherisy and other English troops entered Roeux; but neither of these could be held against the persistent

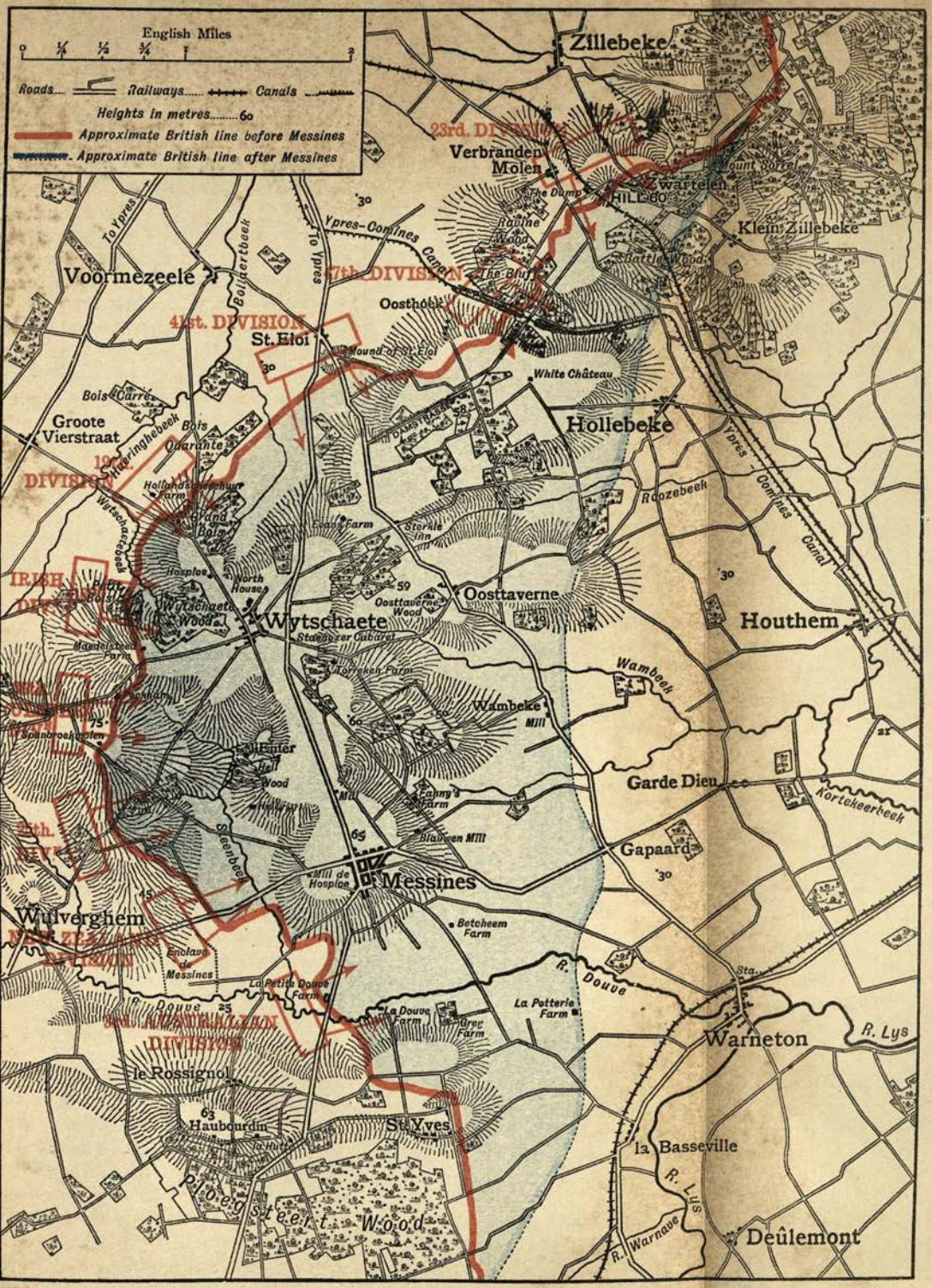
counter-attacks and the heavy gun bombardment with which the Third Army's battalions were assailed.

Again the sacrificial attack of the British forces gained some ground and about 1000 prisoners, but it had cost a good deal in men. It had also cost time, and this proved, before the end of 1917, a matter of even greater importance. Probably, however, by drawing into its scope a number of German reserve divisions, it did aid the French in their attempt on the 5th of May to obtain command of the eastern portion of the Chemin-des-Dames Ridge. Whether the expenditure both of British and of French resources on this object were justified is a matter of controversy. The French Government's opinion may be gauged from the fact that General Nivelle was shortly afterwards superseded, and M. Painlevé, the French Premier of the day, has since allowed it to be understood that the Soissons-Rheims attack was condemned by Generals Mangin and Micheler from the outset, and was never within measurable distance of success. Foch and Pétain conducted the operations at the Chemin-des-Dames and elsewhere on a more modest scale throughout the year. With the conclusion of the last great-scale attack which the French were to deliver for fourteen months, Sir Douglas Haig was left free to pursue his own Channel Ports strategy. The efforts of the spring campaign had conquered 60 square miles of territory and the invaluable Vimy Ridge buttress, and had taken nearly 20,000 prisoners and 250 guns.

All this time the preliminary steps for the Ypres salient advance had been in preparation; though until the Arras experiment was at an end it was not possible to divert the whole amount of labour and material necessary to give to the northern movement a chance of a success. Nor was it possible to divert divisions by breaking off the southern action abruptly. An appearance of activity had to be kept up during May, and certain commitments had to be redeemed by positive action, as at Bullecourt, where the positions gained by the Australians must be consolidated or abandoned. Fighting for Bullecourt went on for a fortnight; it was at last secured by London and West Riding Territorials (17th May). Fresnoy was lost; Roeux regained (14th May); a line established between Bullecourt and west of Fontaine-les-Croisilles (16th June). Before that date the Messines attack by the British Second Army (Sir H. Plumer) had been launched.

More than any other does the Messines Battle assume the character of a siege operation. It was the more difficult to conduct because the area was under direct observation by the enemy, and consequently a great part of the preparations were made underground. The natural positions of the Messines Ridge selected for assault were, in fact, mined. Mining had been projected for a year; intensive mining, largely plotted by an Australian geologist (Professor David), had been in progress six months. In all, twenty-four mines were constructed, involving more than 5 miles of gallery. The enemy were not idle in counter-mining, and an incessant underground warfare was carried on. It is not too much to say that the British out-mined the Germans, and when, on the day appointed, a million pounds of explosives wrecked the German positions, the eruption and its effects were exactly what the British experts had foretold.

The Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, at which these operations, and the subsequent assault of Plumer's army, were directed, lies about midway between Armentières and Ypres. It is at the eastern end of the isolated hills which separate the Lys and the Yser; it links them with the rising ground going north across the Ypres-Menin road and on to Passchendaele. Messinés village, on the southern spur, looks over the Lys, and what were then the British lines in the salient. North-west of it is the village of Wytschaete, from which, even more commandingly, could be seen Ypres' ruins and the old British positions. The German lines skirted the western advance foot of the ridge. Their second system formed an inner curve on the ridge, and these defences were strengthened by two chord positions stretching across the arc of the salient, the first through Oosttaverne, the second, behind it, through Warneton. It need hardly be said that the




Map to illustrate the Battle of Messines (June, 1917)

Germans, conscious of the advantages which the ridge conferred, had spared no pains or ingenuity to fortify it. The front selected for the British attack extended in a curve following that of the salient: first St. Yves to Mount Sorrel; the final objective was the Oosttaverne line.

Nineteen mines, the largest of which made a crater 140 yards across, were exploded punctually at 3.10 a.m. on 7th June, and gave the signal alike for the guns and the infantry. So well was every factor timed that English, Irish, Australian, and New Zealand troops almost walked through the remains of the first line of trenches and began to climb up to attack the second line on the crest. In two and a half hours Irish regiments had reached L'Enfer Hill, the outskirts of Wytschaete and Wytschaete Wood (through which a South of Ireland division fought its way). Wessex men cleared the Grand Bois; other English county regiments reached the Damstrasse. The advance was so swift as to outpace the Tanks; but one of these arrived in time to help the infantry to break down the resistance of a machine-gun position north-east of Messines. There was the usual heavy fighting at one or two unsubdued fortress positions, in which the German machine-gunners sustained their high reputation for this form of defence: and Wytschaete was a focus of determined resistance. It was taken by 2 Irish divisions, who blasted their way through it shoulder to shoulder. Before midday the second-line positions on the crest had been taken; the guns were moving up, and the divisions were aligning to press down the eastern slopes of the ridge towards the Oosttaverne line. Before it could be reached Ravine Wood had to be cleared, and isolated companies of Germans to be cleared out of farmhouses, woods, and coppices and strong points in the fortified banks of the Ypres-Comines Canal; but early in the afternoon guns and men were in position for the final assault on the Oosttaverne chord line, and about a quarter to half a mile short of it.

The last burst forward began at 3 o'clock, and before 4 o'clock Oosttaverne village had been captured, and the chord line east of it pierced. Two batteries of artillery, captured whole here, bore witness to the wholesale character of the German collapse; the defenders surrendered without putting up a fight; and by evening the Oosttaverne line had, by its capture, rounded off as complete an engagement "according to plan" as any that the campaign had witnessed. In all 7200 prisoners and 67 guns were captured. The consolidation of the captured positions was effected during the night, and a very ineffective counter-attack up the Warnebeke stream was easily broken up next morning. A better organized counter-attack in the evening of 8th June was beaten off along the whole front of the Oosttaverne line—a testimony to the energy of the engineering parties which had helped to build up the British temporary defences. Subsequent consolidation occupied four days, with a constant activity in front of the new line, and endeavours to extend it laterally at both ends. By the 14th of June the whole of the old German front and support lines north of the Lys had been captured; and a British attack on that evening, south and east of Messines, and along both banks of the Ypres-Comines Canal, enabled the front of the Second Army to be pushed forward along a secure line from the River Warnave to Klein Zillebeke.

The southern buttress, or pivot, for the operations which were designed to secure the Ypres salient by the capture of the northern ridge to where it infringed on Houthulst Forest, was thus secured. The ultimate object—not attained—of these operations was to turn the German flank towards the Belgian coast. The steps by which this was to be attained are perceptible. The British Fifth Army, which was to be the striking force, took over the front from Observatory Ridge to Boesinghe; and the heterogeneous dispersion of French, British, and Belgian troops nearer the coast was rearranged. The section nearest the sea had been occupied by French detachments, and the Belgians sandwiched between them and the British. British troops replaced the French coastal forces; and in the first week of July the Belgian division from Boesinghe to Noordschoote was relieved by the French First Army (General Anthoine). At this

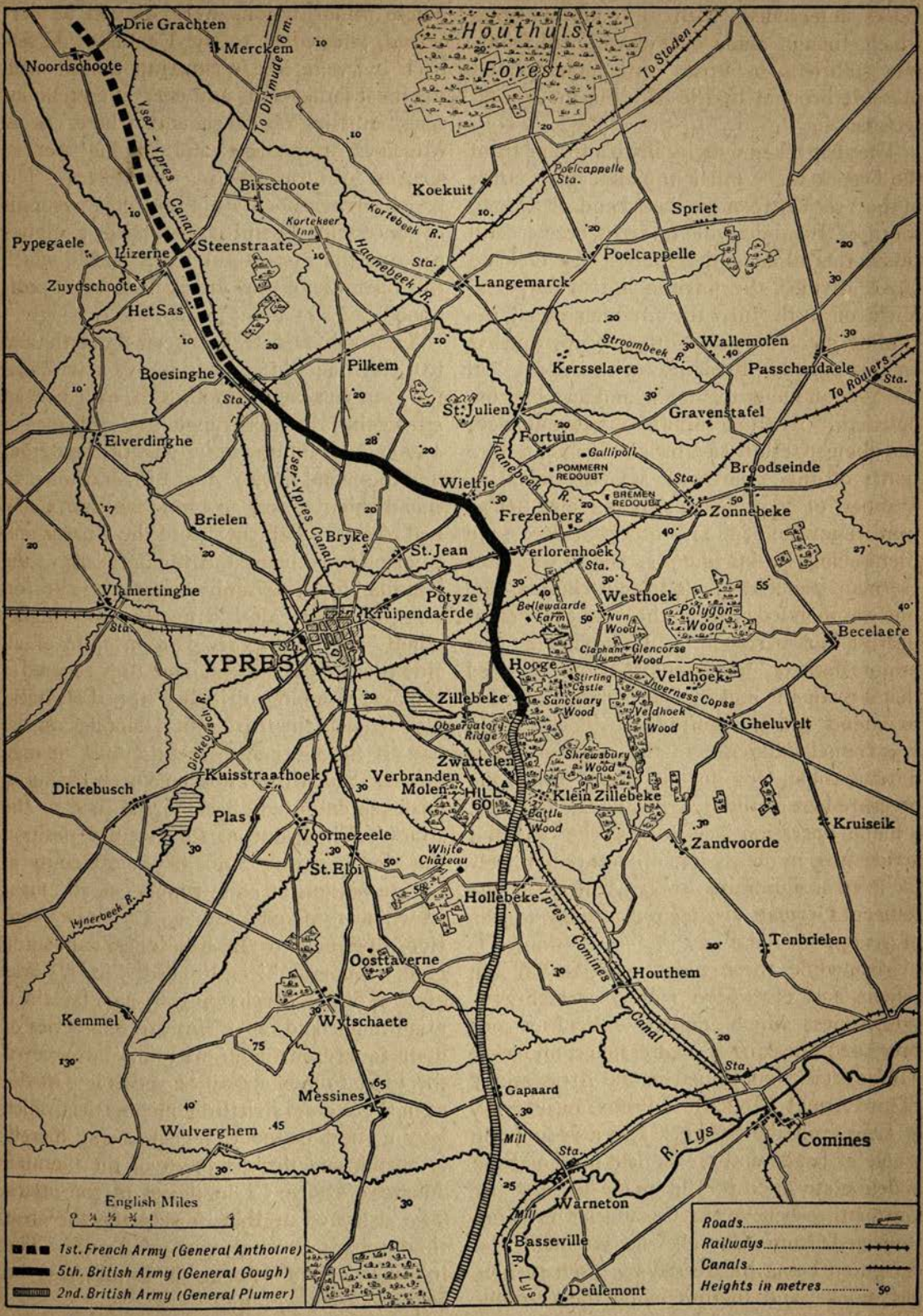
moment, however, the German High Command intervened with a counter-stroke which, though made only on a small front, was sufficient to upset any contemplated pressure brought by the Allies in the coastal sectors.

The strip taken over by British troops from the French was 2 miles in width, lying north of the Yser between the Passchendaele Canal, south of Lombartzyde, and the coast. Between this canal and the coast the Geleide Creek divided the position into two parts. Early on 10th July the German guns, including some specially brought up, opened on this position, breaking up the bridges on the Yser and over the creek, and levelling the defences. A strong infantry attack followed, and the net result was that the British tenure north of the Yser bank was destroyed, a number of the Northamptons and Rifles were overwhelmed, and others had to save themselves by swimming the Yser. No German penetration followed because the line was mended again in the southern section nearest Lombartzyde. In chronicling this minor disaster, Sir Douglas Haig remarks that it made the sector easier for the Germans to defend, which is quite true. It also made it extremely difficult, to the point of being impracticable, for us to exert dangerous pressure here without signalling the fact that a major operation was in progress; and the action was, in short, one of those small, but far from insignificant, spokes which the intelligent German so often put into the wheels of his opponent's plans.

Meanwhile these plans went on in the salient and elsewhere with a steady progressiveness which ignored difficulties and presented a bearing of unalterable confidence. Minor attacks continued in the Arras sector (Third Army: Monchy-le-Preux, 14th June), at Lens, and the Souchez River during the whole of June; and on the last days of June a deliberate attempt was made to lead the Germans to believe that an attack was being projected from Gavrelle to Hulluch, the deception being buttressed by discharges of gas, smoke, and thermit along the 12-miles front; while sharp thrusts were made elsewhere, of which the most important was on the Souchez River (28th June), where Canadian and English troops took 300 prisoners. These minor actions were, as will be perceived, antecedent to the Lombartzyde setback, but were, like it, contemporaneous with the most industrious and energetic preliminaries in the Ypres salient, where, as at Messines, tunnelling and mining were a species of warfare in themselves. The aerial preparations were not less vigorous or determined, and approached a climax towards the 31st of July, the date to which the opening of the attack had been postponed.

The original date had been the 25th, and two days later than that it was found that the Germans were adopting the expedient of attempting to disarrange our scheme of assault by withdrawing a part of their front line to second lines. The British counter to this manœuvre was to cross the Yser Canal and to seize, with the aid of the Guards and troops from General Anthoine's army, the German first-line and support trenches on a 2-mile front east and north of Boesinghe. They held on to this gain in spite of all attempts to eject them, and thus secured a valuable jumping-off place for the attack. The reasons for this tactical blunder on the part of the Germans are uncertain; it may be that they withdrew prematurely owing to mistaken information as to the date of the attack. The value of the forward position was that it was situated at one extremity of the projected attack, which, in its main effort, was to open up on a 7½-mile front from Boesinghe to the Zillebeke-Zandvoorde road. General Gough (Fifth Army) was given 4 army corps for this assault, which was designed to move forward in a series of bounds, keeping step with the advance of the First French Army on its left. On the right the Second British Army was to advance only a short distance, its aim being merely to attract and disperse part of the German defensive effort. The object of the attack may be stated as that of securing the crest of the high ground east of Ypres. The crossings of the Steenbeek should also be held.

Under the effects of our bombardment and the employment of our new weapon—a combination of oil and thermit which was a




The Ypres Salient before the battle of 31st July, 1917: map showing the approximate positions of the Franco-British line

vast improvement on the crude flame-throwers of the Germans—the German first lines were all but emptied of their defenders, and French, English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh troops entered them all the way from the Tansbeek floods to the Zillebeke-Zandvoorde road. On the left, the French and British troops carried the whole first-line system with scarcely a check, and proceeded according to time-table to assault the second lines. By nine in the morning, five hours after starting, Verlorenhoek, Pilkem, and Frezenberg had been stormed, and all the second line north of the Ypres-Roulers railway had been seized. The French had made good their advance with equal decision and with small loss. The field artillery moved up behind and broke down the remnants of opposition at a strong point—the Pommern Redoubt—so that the third bound on this portion of the front could be resumed at the hour assigned. St. Julien was captured; Highland, Welsh, and Guards battalions secured the crossings of the Steenbeek, and the French battalions, having also secured their final objectives, advanced beyond them and seized Bixschoote. A counter-attack at the Franco-British junction was beaten off.

In the southern portion of the attack the advance had gone less smoothly and swiftly. The German resistance in the difficult country east of Ypres, where the Ypres-Menin road crosses the crest of the ridge that goes from Wytschaete to Passchendaele, and where lay the key of the position, was obstinate and protracted. Sanctuary Wood, the Bellewaarde Ridge, Hooge, and Shrewsbury Forest were all regions which had to be fought through, or fought for, and on either side of the notorious road a determined resistance disputed the advance over every yard. Two small woods, and a redoubt in a larger one, held out, and held up the attack till next day, and the limits of success were set by the outskirts of the village of Westhoek. At the two small woods Tanks came into action late in the day, in time to help the hard-tried infantry in repelling the counter-attacks which the Germans were able to set in motion from behind their unsubdued defences. As the result of the day's work, therefore, the Allies had in the north, where the French co-operation had been perfect, secured the enemy's second line as far as St. Julien (and beyond it at Bixschoote) as well as the Steenbeek crossings; and in the south had a hold on the ridge crest, except at Westhoek. The Second Army, to which a subsidiary part only had been allotted, had advanced some little distance with small losses and great success, capturing La Basse Ville and Hollebeke. Between them the Allies had taken some 8000 prisoners and 40 guns.

In Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch relating to these operations mention is made at this point of the deplorable weather, the effects of which, in a country where the sinking of any trench found water, were disastrous to any commander who wished to move quickly. From this time onwards the hopes of many promising movements were drowned in the mud of the salient, and the handicap of the conditions was so obvious that it is impossible for any critic to say that military genius might have risen superior to them. But this much may be observed, that if, in the first place, the British plan had been put into action earlier in the year, the delays might have been less crucial, and the final quenching in October need not have occurred; and, in the second place, had there been complete Franco-British unity of effort, the blows at the Germans would not have been confined to one section of country, and that the one in which these conditions were most operative. It is none the less indisputable that the weather which dogged Sir Douglas Haig's offensives in August and later was abnormal; and that with ground which, after four days incessant rain, " was transformed into long stretches of bog impassable except by a few well-defined tracks, which became marks for the enemy's artillery ", it was impracticable to push on the first August offensive to the limits of its promise. The delay naturally afforded the Germans time to recover from the disorganization into which the first attack had brought them. It also gave confidence to their counter-attacks, which were begun with promptitude, especially on the high ground abutting on the Ypres-Menin road, and near St. Julien.

*British Official Photograph*

A BRITISH TANK GOING INTO ACTION

Advancing to the successful attack on the Hindenburg Line

*British Official Photograph*

A BRITISH TANK AWAITING THE ORDER TO ADVANCE

Some of the crew outside for a breath of air

Their artillery soon found volume and direction, and St. Julien was lost before being retaken on 3rd August; but the date itself indicates what was actually happening in the days following the big attack, and it was that after it the Allies were engaged, not in pushing on, but in clearing up. It was not, in fact, till 16th August that the second bound forward could be attempted.

On the day before it was set in motion a highly-successful minor operation at Lens by the Canadian Corps not only greatly improved the situation of the British forces in that neighbourhood, but by threatening the town more immediately drew German reserves to it, thereby lessening the number that could be diverted to oppose the main offensive. The front attacked was some two and a half miles in width; the results achieved included the capture of that Hill 70 on which so many hopes had perished, so many lives been lost, in the Battle of Loos two years before, as well as a number of the mining suburbs; and 1100 prisoners from 3 German divisions holding the defences.

While the Germans were digesting the import of this surprise, the main salient attack was renewed (16th August) north and east of Ypres by the Fifth British and First French Armies. The French were given the task of clearing the Bixschoote peninsula, which they did with great speed and at a relatively light cost, their casualties occurring chiefly at the remaining fortified farms abutting on the Steenbeek stream. The British brigades joining the French also did their work with speed and quick success, clearing up a hamlet between their front and Langemarck, and taking the section of the Langemarck-Gheluvelt defensive line three hours after starting. These gains were kept, and were supported by the determination of other brigades on their right, which in spite of counter-attacks established themselves on a line running north from St. Julien to the old German third line east of Langemarck. But while thus, on the left of the attack, gains were made with ease, or by hard fighting, the conditions became reversed on the attack extended towards Inverness Copse on its right.

A new form of position-defences had been devised by the Germans in the absence of the ability to construct dug-outs in soil where the water always lay a few feet below the surface. These were the "pill-boxes"—reinforced concrete structures, often a number of feet thick, and resistant even to direct shell-bursts. Heavily armed with machine-guns, and by machine-gun companies who were at their best in such surroundings, these field fortresses were the most dangerous obstacles to an advance, because, while some were quickly reduced—generally by bombing—others held out long after the assaulting troops had passed them, becoming a deadly menace to supports, and a focus for the encouragement of counter-attacks. They partially ruined the successful advance of the British centre, which, after reaching the points assigned to it, was, in the absence of adequate artillery support, unable to hold up against a heavy counter-attack in the neighbourhood of the Wieltje-Passchendaele road. While the pill-boxes and our own inadequate artillery support—the blame for which Sir Douglas Haig imputes to the weather, because it made aeroplane observation impossible—threw the British centre back, the very capable German resistance on the British right (south) prevented any but slight gains being made south of St. Julien. The northern sectors (mainly) had taken 2000 prisoners and made a gap in the German defences; but it is difficult to describe the attack of 16th August as anything but a check.

By this time, however, the Head-quarters Staff had perceived that part of the British failure to advance through the mud was attributable to the adaptation of the German tactics to the conditions, and to the adoption of a system of defence in which the Germans emptied their front trenches and poured a waiting counter-attack on the enemy occupiers of them before the newly-taken positions could be consolidated. It was time to devise new methods of attack: and another pause supervened before these could be put into operation.

In the interval a number of operations which, in spite of their restricted aim, provoked hard fighting, and demanded a high degree of skill in order to obtain results

from them, were conducted in the neighbourhood of the disputed Menin road (22nd to 28th August), where a footing was established on the western edge of Inverness Copse, and near St. Julien, where, between 19th and 27th August, a half-mile advance was made over a front of 2 miles. [There was other fighting at Lens (21st August) and at Hargicourt[1] (26th August), with local gains and captures.]

The spade work at St. Julien and the Menin road paved the way for the larger attack, in which the Second Army and the Fifth Army were to co-operate, the Second Army attacking the high ground about the Ypres-Menin road, and the Fifth Army extending the attack northwards on the line of the Ypres-Roulers railway. The front of attack extended a distance of 8 miles from Langemarck, north of the railway, to the Ypres-Comines Canal, north of Hollebeke. The advance was a tribute to the preparatory care with which it had been organized, and it surmounted the handicap of rain and mist which ushered it in on the morning of 24th September. Welsh and West Country troops farthest south cleared the small woods in front of them north of the canal; English regiments made their way along and across the valley of the Bassevillebeek, and up the slopes of the Tower Hamlets Ridge. Here they were held up by machine-gun fire from the crest and from the neighbouring Veldhoek Ridge. But North Country troops, which meanwhile had carried the whole of Inverness Copse, had beaten off a counter-attack, and gone on to capture Veldhoek, relieved the battalions struggling on the Tower Hamlets slopes from the ordeal of enfilading fire, and enabled them to get to the crest and stay there. Left of the North-country division were the Australians, whose tradition it was to go forward always as far as their flanking divisions could support them, and they justified it by carrying what was left of Glencorse Wood, and by taking Polygon Wood village, and a very awkward corner of the German third line, which had been a thorn in the attacking side. By midday the western portion of Polygon Wood had been cleared, not without a fierce struggle between bomb and machine-gun; and the Second Army front had advanced at all points to its destination.

The Fifth Army had done its work as well. Scottish and South African battalions advancing on either side of the railway, reduced the fortified farms, which were the foremost line of the German defences, and pressed on to take the redoubts in front of Zonnebeke and the defences of Zevenhote. Three hours' determined fighting put this wing in possession of the lines assigned to it. The task of the West Lancashire men south and east of St. Julien was more protracted; the ground was in the condition usual after heavy rains, but the advance was well shepherded by the artillery, and by the afternoon the task was done, an hour or so after London and Highland territorials had broken down the resistance of the fortified farms and concrete pill-boxes north of the road from Langemarck to Zonnebeke. The new methods of artillery preparation, and of advance in narrow depth, had been justified; the whole of the high ground crossed by the Menin road, which had been withheld despite the previous efforts to master it, passed into British possession, and the advance on the right wing towards Tower Hamlets had proved a deciding factor in securing the gains on the left.

Both in its tactics, and in its prosecution, the attack was a success, and the best testimony to its extent was the determination and number of the German efforts to recover the lost ground. As before, the enemy strength had been reserved for the counter-attack, but eleven such enterprises were repelled by the fire of the British supports, which had come up immediately on the heels of the assault, and others were broken up by the artillery, which had been brought to bear in conformity with the advance. East of St. Julien, one of these counter-attacks, the third, drove back the British temporarily, but the Germans were not in sufficient force to sustain themselves, and were in turn driven out again during the ensuing twenty-four hours. The struggle of counter-attack and counter-attack went on north-east of Langemarck for three days; that at Polygon Wood and the Tower Ham-

[1] The gain here was extended in September.

lets Ridge for five. But by 25th September the ground won had been firmly consolidated, and the German counter-attacks had added considerably in their killed and wounded to the total of 3000 prisoners they had lost in the first assault.

Altogether, the 20th September thrust may be said to have been one of the high-water marks of the British autumn campaign, and by the excellence of its methods had obliged the German Head-quarters Staff to reconsider its methods of elastic defence. A testimony to its value not less striking was that the assaulting force was ready to renew the push as soon as the last German counter-attack had been repelled. On 26th September an assault was driven home on a front extending 6 miles, roughly from St. Julien (north) to Tower Hamlets (south): but it was the 5 miles north of the Menin road on which it was pressed, so as to secure a jumping-off ground for the subsequent struggle for that position of the main ridge inclining towards Passchendaele. The fighting in this attack was harder. As usual, when the pieces for a problem were all set, and surprise was no longer possible, the German defence could only be smothered by superior fighting material, for their tactics were as good as those of any opponent. Sir Douglas Haig had some incomparable fighting material; the Australians, for example, who on this occasion carried all that was left of Polygon Wood, and reached the road that winds below the ridge from Beceleare to Zonnebeke; and not inferior to them, the English, Scottish, and Welsh divisions, which had repelled the last German counter-attack of the preceding day, and now broke through the resistance of the fortified farms and posts in front of them, relieving, in their foot-by-foot advance, two companies of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who had been marooned in the forward line all the previous night. Zonnebeke village and church were taken in the northern sector of the attack, and beyond them northwards a long stretch of the concrete fortifications, all by English troops, mainly Londoners and Midlanders.

There were far more killed than prisoners (who numbered fewer than 2000); and the suggested reason was that the attack anticipated another series of German counter-attacks, which were now sent in, belated but urgent. Seven such attacks were delivered on 27th September against the whole of the new British positions. They were fiercest in the hollow of the ridge through which the Reutelbeek runs south of Polygon Wood; but they were beaten off, and their cessation was probably due to the disorganization into which the arrangements for them had been thrown by the surprise attack. They were begun again three days later in a more concerted manner, with the expectation of, at least, disconcerting future surprises, and went on till 3rd October. It is the best testimony to the efficiency with which the British battle machinery was working—though admittedly at a high cost—that it was by that date ready and able to repeat its movement. East of Polygon Wood and Zonnebeke it was at the foot of the ridge.

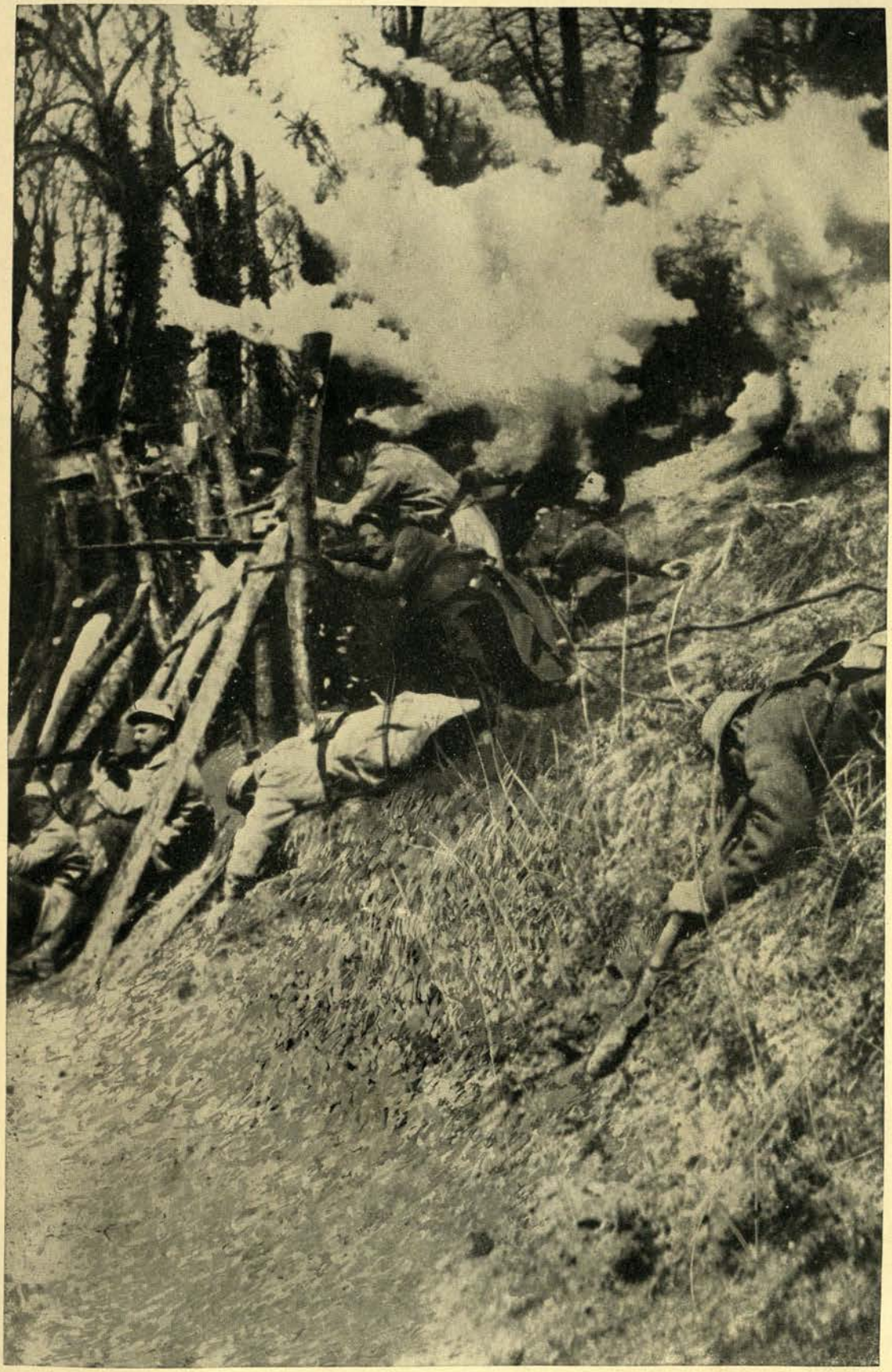
The front of the principal attack, which extended from the Menin road, 7 miles northwards to the Ypres-Staden railway near Poelcapelle, was intended to take the crest positions of the ridge. A short stretch of German positions was simultaneously attacked on the southern side of the road. A day of fierce fighting followed (4th October), for the Germans, revising their plan of emptying their forward positions, had 2 divisions in line and 3 fresh divisions behind them, which had been brought up for a strong counter-attack. This counter-attack our artillery barrage anticipated by ten minutes, falling on the massing German infantry, disorganizing the German barrage, and allowing the British assaulters to get to close quarters while the defenders were still shaken by the unexpected. On the right and centre of the attack where this took place, the results were apparent not merely in the gain of positions, but in the large numbers of prisoners taken, amounting to over 5000, and in the absence of any immediate serious counter-attacks following on the action over the greater part of the front.

The numbers and dispositions of the enemy, not less than the strength of their defences, made the British victory a hard-fought one notwithstanding. On the night of the attack, Polderhoek Château, Reutel

village, and the German zarebas east of Polygon Wood, were captured only by the determination of those English and Scottish fighters who took them. They did a great share of the heavy work, but the division which, advancing across the crest of the ridge, taking the village of Noordenhoek as its last prize, had an easy task. A fourth of the English counties, with some of the Scottish, were represented in the endeavour. Nor was the Australian and New Zealand advance a light task, dashing as it appeared. The Anzacs between them took the Gravenstafel Spur, bombing the Germans out of their trenches here, and stormed Molenarrelsthoek and Broodseinde, finally establishing themselves well beyond the crest road from Becelaere to Passchendaele. Farther north, the valley of the flooded Stroombeeke was crossed through the mud by South Midlanders, and Poelcappelle was encircled, and in part stormed, by other English troops. Tanks were used for Poelcappelle, though the ground did not often favour these machines. Still farther south, where the attack was weaker, the ground made was slight, though the fighting was hard; and in the extreme south, where limited objectives had been assigned, the same situation obtained. Though the vigour of the assault, and the time happily chosen for it, had crippled the German counter-attack organization, they had not paralysed it, and a succession of heavy onsets between the Menin road and Reutel dislodged the Scottish Borderers from Polderhoek Château, and the North Countrymen from part of Reutel, at the eighth attempt. Other counter-attacks were broken up before they got under way.

It might have been well to rest content with the positions and advantages which the grip on the ridge, secured by the 4th October attack, had given the Second and Fifth Armies. Sir Douglas Haig observes that with the holding on the ridge, and the possession of the Gravenstafel Spur at its extremity, a position had been obtained on which the British could rest with security, the long-standing menace to the Ypres salient obliterated. There were sound reasons for doing so; the year was far spent; the Germans had now solidified their defensive organization, and were prepared to resist to the last. In the wisdom of after events it is easy now to see that with the promise of the earlier year wrecked in the Russian collapse, and in the French incomplete achievement on the Chemin-des-Dames, it would have been wiser to let well alone. On the other hand, there was a rising scale of success in the attacks which the British Second and Fifth Armies had delivered; and the mere fact that, though the circumstances of attack had so often been unpropitious, the German ability to resist them seemed to be lessening was a temptation to pursue the offensive. The intention of the French to deliver yet another attack on the Chemin-des-Dames (at Malmaison), which would consequently benefit from the continuance of the British operations, seems to have outweighed the probability that there would be not enough time to complete the capture of the Passchendaele section of the ridge, and the possibility that the unfavourable weather might occur.

Unfortunately, as Sir Douglas Haig says in his dispatch, the unfavourable weather did supervene to prejudice the joint Franco-British attack, which, in spite of the doubts as to its wisdom, he decided to launch on the 9th of October. The front of assault comprised 6 miles of British forces, from Zonnebeke to north of Poelcappelle station, and a lesser stretch of French troops farther north to Draaibank. The best part of the advance was made on the Allied left, where French and British (Guards) divisions crossed the flooded valley of the Broenbeck, and, capturing with steady irresistibility a number of farm-houses and fortified posts, as well as woods and small villages, established themselves finally on the outskirts of Houthulst Forest. It was a step forward of a mile and a half through the flat fortified country. But as the line farther south approached the ridge position the going became ever harder. On the right of the Guards, the English division in the centre forced its way to a line well to the east of the road from Houthulst to Poelcappelle; but the other troops, which fought through Poelcappelle itself, and the Australians and English who carried the line up the slopes



AMONG THE "IRON DIVISIONS" OF THE FRENCH ARMY

German shrapnel bursting behind a hastily-built barricade

towards Passchendaele and the main ridge, purchased their ground dearly.

A number of points were nevertheless captured, as well as two villages, and a subsidiary feature of the attack, the recapture of Reutel, helped to round off an operation which must be described as a success, though it was neither an easy nor a cheap one. Some 2000 prisoners were taken, but the general course of the action had strengthened the British Commander-in-Chief's conviction that the best that could be done in Flanders for that year had already been done; and that, though by limited attacks it might be practicable to extend a hold on the ridge as far as Passchendaele, no further large scale attack was worth its expenditure. A continuance of pressure was justifiable chiefly for the purpose of keeping the Germans occupied here, and of masking that surprise at Cambrai which had been suggested as likely to promise good and, possibly, noteworthy results. Accordingly, limited operations were continued in Flanders; and they could not be continued without sacrifice. It was the losses entailed in these truncated attacks which contributed more than anything else to the widespread feeling that a large part of the later British campaign in Flanders had been unnecessary butting through mud and blood to an end which led nowhere.

A very brief spell of fine weather in the last week of October gave illusive promise to an attack planned on a front extending between the two parallel railways from Ypres. Rain on the morning of the attack (26th October) reduced the prospects of any cheap success to the lowest possible likelihood; and the task of the Canadian division, brought up from Lens, in making its way up the valley of the Ravebeek on either side of the stream was one for heroes. The Canadians lost heavily from the machine-guns on the small hill south of Passchendaele, and at the Bellevue Spur, where they strove to work round the village. It took them the whole day to reach their goal; and their losses were galling. So also were those of the London Territorials and the Naval Division, who advanced through the craters and pitfalls of the flooded and marshy ground on their left. Men who fell in these attacks had little chance of succour, for they stood the double risk of death by enemy fire, and death by drowning. Perhaps the most relevant testimony to the conditions under which this, and similar attacks, were made at this period, is that a battalion of English troops which simultaneously re-entered Gheluvelt and Polderhoek Château could not repel a German counter-attack because their rifles were choked with mud.

A French attack, in co-operation with the Belgians, on this day and the following two, conquered the difficulties of advance over the flooded area of the St. Jansbeek, and cleared the whole of the Merckem peninsula. There were but two more advances this year in the same area, by the first of which, on 30th October, the Canadian and British divisions engaged in the attack of the 26th renewed their attempt on a slightly shorter line. Again the London and Naval Divisions ploughed their way through the mud; again the Canadians fought tooth and nail to win the goal of Passchendaele. They reached the outskirts, and on the spur west of it beat off five German efforts to dislodge them. The reward of their tenacity came to the Canadians a week later, on 6th November, when in one final, almost anguished, effort they won the right to put the name of Passchendaele on the flags of their regiments by capturing the village and the high ground immediately north and north-west of it.

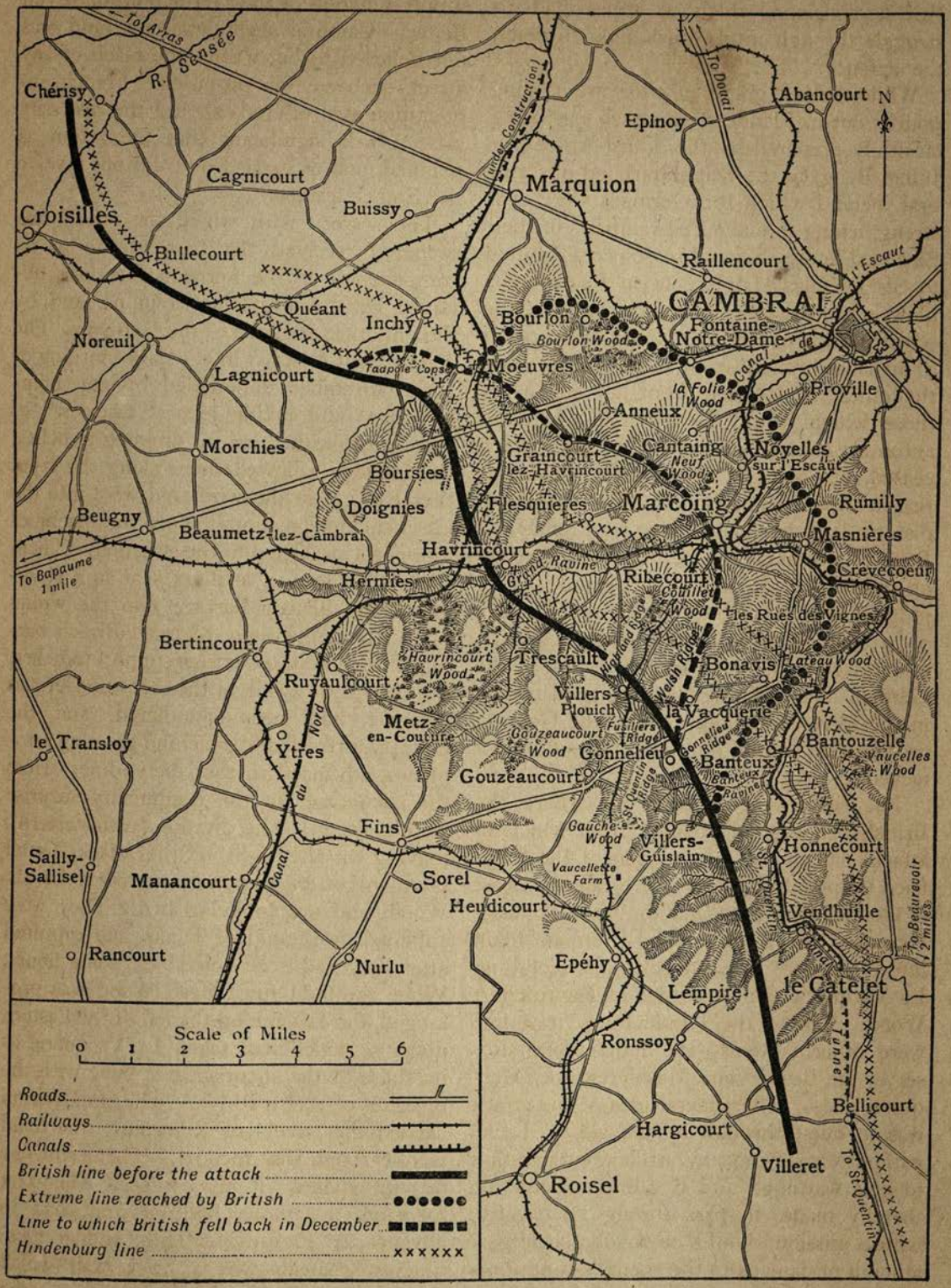
The hold on the ridge where this stronghold stood was consolidated on subsequent days, but Passchendaele, with its toll of men's lives sacrificed to obtain it, and its dubious value, must stand as the emblem of the latter part of the Flanders campaign of 1917. Sir Douglas Haig most truly describes it as an offensive maintained for three and a half months under the most adverse conditions of weather, entailing almost superhuman exertions on the part of the troops of all arms and services. The greatest tribute to it was not the number of its prisoners, though these reached 25,000 together with 75 guns, nor the ground captured, though much of it was of the highest tactical value, but in the fact that 78 German divisions had been employed from first to

last in holding back assaulting columns of British divisions which at times had to struggle through mud, waist high, to reach the defence.

While the last grains of effort were being poured out in Flanders, an attack was being stealthily prepared by the Third Army (Sir Julian Byng) in the neighbourhood of Cambrai, behind which the Germans were ever strengthening the laboured ramparts of their Siegfried lines. Several reasons contributed to Sir Douglas Haig's consent to deliver a blow here: the chief of which was that the redistribution of German forces, as the result of divisions brought from, or exchanged with, the quiescent Russian front, as well as of those which would be available when the autumn campaign of the British and French ceased, was not yet being made. Another reason was that owing to the Caporetto disaster Italy was clamouring for French and British assistance, to be rendered directly or indirectly. It was judged, and rightly judged, to be probable that a surprise attack on a defined and limited scale might be undertaken at some weakened section of the German line, and might secure good results in the forty-eight hours before the German organization could reinforce the sector attacked.

The sector chosen was one where the British had a good position from which to attack, namely, at that section of the Siegfried (Hindenburg) line which ran from east of Gonnelieu to the Canal du Nord, opposite Hermies. In front of the German main line there were forward positions, including La Vacquerie, and a corner of Havrincourt Wood. Behind the Hindenburg front line were other systems—the Hindenburg Reserve, the Beaurevoir, Masnières, and Marquion lines. The general idea of the attack was to burst through by the aid of Tanks without employing any artillery preparation to give warning; and if a break should be thereby made, to pass through it cavalry, whose mission should be to do the largest amount of damage to the enemy's communications in the shortest possible time. Otherwise the tactical object of the break-through was to secure, if possible, a position from Bourlon and eastwards which would be a perpetual threat to Cambrai—the essential supply-junction of the German army of von Below. Cambrai itself was not, and was not believed to be, within the reach of any attack such as was proposed. French co-operation was offered, should the necessity arise. It is significant that the action as planned, and as carried out, did not involve the French armies.

The secrecy with which the attack was prepared received the best tribute to its completeness in the immediate success obtained by the assaulting columns, and by the undiluted surprise of the Germans. The Tanks went forward in the dark morning of 20th November unheralded by any bombardment and taking great "fascines" of brushwood with them for crossing trenches; the infantry followed them along the lanes they had cut in the wire, and were into the German first positions before the machine-gun posts awakened to the situation. Then, while the German artillery sent in a straggling and dilatory barrage into the wrong place, the deliberately retarded British barrage lifted into the German support trenches. By the time it was light the first line German defences had been smothered, and the infantry, preceded by machine-gunning aeroplanes, advanced to the reserve line. Here the advantages of the preliminary surprise were melting. The division (12th Eastern), moving on the right of the attack, found German batteries strongly posted in Lateau Wood, and not to be rushed. They were subdued by the aid of Tanks, and captured after they had been served for some hours. While the fight for Lateau Wood was prolonged, the division on the left of the Eastern division, which had taken La Vacquerie as its share of the surprise, was busy with the defences of Welsh Ridge. The 6th Division carried the streets of Ribecourt; the 62nd went through Havrincourt. Then came one of the spokes in the wheel. The 51st Division, a famous fighting unit, had to advance up Flesquières Hill; and at Flesquières Château was a brick wall which sheltered the Germans' best arm—the machine-gunners—while other machine-guns enfiladed the advance to it. The division was held up: the Tanks which came up to




Map illustrating the First Battles of Cambrai, November–December, 1917

NOTE.—Hill shading is shown only in the area covered by the sphere of the operations described

help them could not completely expedite the time-table, and several were caught by direct hits from the German batteries, one of which, specially mentioned in British dispatches, was served till its last man, an officer, fell at his gun. Flesquières village remained untaken.

There were many individual exploits. The Durhams, on this side of the attack, charged a battery and took seven guns, and the Ulster Division (36th) captured a spoil-bank on the side of the Canal du Nord, and subsequently marched with West Riding Yorkshiremen (62nd Division) past Havrincourt and the Hindenburg Reserve line, ultimately carrying all the trench systems as far as the Bapaume-Cambrai road. Except the check at Flesquières, everything seemed to be going by clockwork, including the cavalry, which was moving up behind the infantry. But then came the second spoke in the wheel, more damaging than Flesquières. The 29th Division, on the right of the bulge which the attack had driven in, had entered Masnières and Marcoing, and taken the passages over the Canal de l'Escaut by which the cavalry was to be loosed on to the enemy's communications. At Marcoing they arrived just in time to prevent the destruction of the bridge by being blown up; at Masnières the bridge was partially destroyed, and one of our own Tanks fell through in crossing it. Consequently, the cavalry never crossed the canal at all—except a small Canadian detachment (Fort Garry Horse) which got over on a temporary bridge and did good work. Its success, which cost it most of its horses, and a number of its men, threw, by its gallantry and resource, the ineffectiveness of the great body of the British cavalry into darker relief. Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch blames no one; but he remarks that the delay of the guns among the sunken roads of this part of the battle-field was unavoidable.

In spite of the failure of such hopes as were dependent on cavalry action, the infantry and Tanks had done everything expected of them. Three German defensive systems drawn over a depth of country of more than 4 miles had been broken and captured; some 5000 prisoners, and a large number of guns, had been taken. But for the mishaps indicated the gains might have been on a larger scale and of a different complexion. There yet remained a possible twenty-four hours before German reinforcements could arrive in force, in which to improve on what had been won. Flesquières was attacked at dawn of the 21st and captured, as was Masnières, and when that was secured a hand was laid on the Beaurevoir-Masnières defensive line to the north. But already the sands of the hours of immunity from counter-attack were running out; the German main communications had been left intact, and, indeed, untouched. Though the British captured Les Rues-des-Vignes it could not be held against reinforcements coming up; and at Rumilly, Noyelles, and in the region east of the canal, the prospects of advance faded hourly. On the other side of the wedge the outlook was more prosperous. Anneux, Cantaing, Fontaine-Notre-Dame, and the outskirts of Bourlon Wood were reached by the 51st and 62nd Divisions, and farther west the 36th Division was battling for Moeuvres at the close of the day.

The point of the British wedge had not reached Bourlon Wood, and its sides were beginning to feel pressure at the end of the second day. The problem before the Commander-in-Chief was whether to permit the local commander to carry on, and attempt to force Bourlon Wood, and so secure permanently a high ground position which would overlook the valleys of the Sensée and the Scarpe, or whether the ground should be abandoned and a possibly costly action be refused. Sir Douglas Haig seems to have halted between the two decisions, but finally to have adopted the worse one, which was to try to improve the victory won, in the confidence that the Germans would be unable to evict his forces. Bourlon Wood was duly taken (23rd), though not without four and a half hours' costly fighting; and a more pressing hint that trouble was brewing for the British was the circumstance that Fontaine-Notre-Dame, which was on the right of the position, and had been reckoned on to buttress our holding, could not be cleared of the enemy, even by the efforts of the 51st Division. On the other side of

Bourlon, however, Tadpole Copse, an outlier of Moeuvres, had been taken.

The increasing difficulties at Bourlon, and at Fontaine-Notre-Dame, found replicas in the increasing frequency of German counter-attacks, and the stiffening of German resistance all over the face of the salient that the British attack had created. Bourlon village was taken twice, on 24th and 27th November (62nd Division), but it could not be held, and at Tadpole Copse the struggle became severer. On the 27th the Guards Division was sent in to capture the ridge dominating Bourlon and Fontaine-Notre-Dame—the 62nd Division co-operating. The ridge and the villages were captured, but neither could be held. It was clear by the end of November that the 10,000 German prisoners taken were the utmost extent of the British prize, and that the Bourlon salient could be held only by an expenditure of men and energy in which the Germans were not likely to be outmatched.

It furthermore became evident that the Germans, who indeed made no secret of their intentions, were preparing to do their best to deprive the British Third Army of more than its gains. In the circumstances, since retreat from the position was almost as difficult as holding it, the best that could be done was to stiffen the Third Army's right flank from Cantaing to the Banteux Ravine. Five divisions were put in for this purpose, with other divisions—Guards, 62nd, and the 2nd Cavalry Division, which had been dismounted to fight at Bourlon Wood. Other divisions were sent for; the divisional commanders from Villers Guislain southwards were warned, and most reasonable provisions seemed to have been taken. The one factor which could not be discounted in advance was the German military ability, when faced with a problem of this kind, namely a tired army in unconsolidated defences, to solve it in a satisfactory manner.

They did so solve it, and, plagiarizing the British surprise of 20th November, launched their heavy counter-stroke on the British right flank from Vendhuille to Masnières with the briefest possible bombardment. The sectors in which the surprise was most complete, and in which battery commanders were thunderstruck at finding Germans behind, instead of in front of them, were those of the Bonavis Ridge and Gonnelieu. The Germans swarmed here almost without a check, and it may be admitted that in the dismay of surprise some defending units made no resistance at all. All the more credit is reflected on the 29th Division on the Masnières front, which, though taken in reverse by being left in the air as a division south of it gave way, fought all day and kept its lines intact. There were other instances of bravery and good fighting: the 92nd Field Artillery, the troops east of Villers Guislain, 2 Lancashire battalions, provided examples of isolated gallantry. But they did not avail to stave off the loss of the Bonavis Ridge, Gonnelieu, Villers Guislain, and, next morning, Gouzeaucourt. The disaster was considerable; a limit was put to it next day when the Guards and part of the 29th Division, and artillery of the 47th Division—straight off the march—began to restore the situation.

It must, however, be recorded in respect of this German success that it was localized even in the chosen battle-field. The attacks on other sectors, especially on the whole of the northern area from Fontaine-Notre-Dame round the salient to Tadpole Copse, were of an entirely different character, and had entirely different results. At the end of the day the British line, in spite of attacks many times renewed, stood where it had fought, and, fighting where it stood, had inflicted far heavier losses than it had sustained. The struggle continued next day, but by that time the Third Army had begun to counter-attack. Gonnelieu and the St. Quentin Ridge were temporarily retaken. German attacks on Marcoing, Fontaine-Notre-Dame, and Bourlon were repelled. Nevertheless, it was palpable that the British position, undermined as it was by the piercing of its eastern flank, was placed in a very unfavourable position for resisting future attack, and the Commander-in-Chief gave orders for the gradual reduction, by retreat, of the occupied salients. Gonnelieu and La Vacquerie were abandoned, and a further German thrust towards Welsh Ridge determined a still further concentration of the

lines. On the night of 4th–5th December Bourlon Wood was evacuated, and all the ground north of Flesquières Ridge was relinquished. The retirement was skilfully conducted with very little incidental loss. To sum up the results of the enterprise: the British Third Army captured 7 miles of German front line, and a rather lesser length of the second reserve line, with three villages included, Flesquières, Ribecourt, and Havrincourt. Its captures numbered 11,000 prisoners and 145 guns, and the losses of its own men and guns, captured in the German counter-stroke ten days afterwards, diminished the value, but did not alter the character of the achievement. The "Battle of Cambrai" was an incomplete success, but a fitting crown to the British Western campaign of 1917, which had been continuous for seven and a half months, with the smallest possible breaks, and had captured 70,000 prisoners and over 500 guns.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN OF 1917

The reassurance which had come to the French people, after the triumphant reaction at Verdun in 1916, sought to find a new military policy and a new director of it. Marshal Joffre, after the one expensive offensive in Champagne in 1915, had fallen back on a method of defensive fighting, which was based on the sound understanding that it was his duty to *ménager les hommes*, to husband French resources, till the British armies were in a position to act as reserves to be entirely depended on. The tenacity of the British army on the Somme, and the definite adoption of conscription in Great Britain, were sufficient evidence that both in point of ability and numbers this dependable reserve was present; and the course of the war in 1917 gave, in fact, ample proof of it. It was indeed said, with some justice, that the Germans were restrained from throwing all their weight on the French line in the effort to break it because they were aware that while they were thus fully occupied, the British would be able similarly to break through at the weakened sectors of the German front.

A rather notorious interview, which appeared in some French newspapers at the beginning of 1917, and in which Sir Douglas Haig was reported to have said that the British could break through the German line if that were its object, gave colour to the belief that the French army was also capable of similar or greater successes—as, perhaps, the interview was intended to do. But the general feeling in France at the beginning of 1917 was that the French armies could be led to decisive victory—if the time, the place, the leader, were well chosen. This belief did not regard Marshal Joffre as the heaven-sent leader. The natural successor, if he retired, was General Foch, and Foch's motto of "Attack! Attack!—and again Attack!" would, it might have seemed, satisfy any advocate of a forward military policy. But General Foch was at that time a little out of the public eye, and out of political favour, as he confided to his friend M. Clemenceau; and both he and General Pétain were passed over in favour of the former colonel of artillery who had risen to the rank of brigadier-general at the Battle of the Aisne, and as divisional commander under General Castelnau, and subsequently as corps commander under General Pétain, had made his way upwards to the command of the army of Verdun, when General Pétain's task was finished there. The appointment of General Nivelle was the triumph of the younger school.

General Nivelle stood for the French strategic plan of aiming a blow at the German centre. In striking at the Vimy Ridge the British army in 1917 was taking a step to reduce the north-western pillar of the geographical position on which the Germans

rested their lines of defence across northern France. The corresponding bastion in the south, and one of much greater extent and far less accessible, is the La Fère-Laon position. La Fère and Laon are situated at the northern spur of the Falaise de Champagne, a semicircle of low hills separating the plains of Champagne from the great plateau north of the Aisne. Rising from this river between Soissons and Berry-au-Bac are a number of rugged and thickly wooded heights, culminating in the forests of Coucy and St. Gobain. These are the most formidable obstacles to any thrust made northwards to cross the St. Gobain *massif*. The plan which offers most prospects of success is to thrust up the valley of the River Ailette, which, rising northwest of Craonne, flows nearly parallel to the Aisne before reaching the Oise, which it joins. A canal joins the Aisne to the Ailette at Chavigny.

Before the valley of the Ailette can be commanded, it is necessary to conquer the Chemin-des-Dames, an historic roadway roughly parallel to the Aisne, and running along the crest of the ridge 3 miles north of the river. Part of General Nivelle's plan was, therefore, the subjugation of the Chemin-des-Dames, as a preliminary to the domination of the Ailette valley, and an advance towards Laon, where the Laon-La-Fère position would be turned. It was a sufficiently ambitious plan, too ambitious, as M. Painlevé, subsequently called upon to explain to the French Chamber its failure, admitted; and it was not all the plan. But General Nivelle had, at the beginning of 1917, great confidence that the hour had struck when the war of the trenches could be exchanged for the war of manœuvre, and that if the whole weight of French endeavour and French artillery were thrown at some extended sector of the German lines, a fracture must be made somewhere. It had nearly been done in 1915 over a short front; in 1917 the British were ready to co-operate by drawing away part of the German resources. At the conference of November, 1916, the British Commander-in-Chief had decided to strike a blow at the German right flank as the British share in the campaign, and had consented to begin the spring offensive with the Arras attack. This plan, though it substituted two parallel blows at widely-separated sectors for blows struck along neighbouring sectors, or in concert, was regarded as satisfying to General Nivelle, who accordingly prosecuted his plans independently—as one should perhaps say, instead of inter-independently.

General Nivelle's plan was to enlarge an offensive to 50 miles, leaving the Germans to guess where its greatest weight would be placed, but leaving himself with the opportunity of breaking through on either wing of an attack which stretched from Soissons to Rheims. It was evident that the best results would be obtained by a great success at the western end of the line, where the opportunity would be afforded to press on towards Laon; but if something less than this were obtained, and the Germans were compelled to mass their greatest forces of resistance towards Soissons and the Chemin-des-Dames, then it was possible that a signal advantage might be gained by piercing their lines at the eastern end of the 50-mile front towards Berry-au-Bac and Rheims.

It may be said at once that the time of preparation was too short; that the artillery with which to support it was insufficient; the difficulties underrated, and the plan too grandiose. The Germans had realized the year before the power of a defence over a much shorter front; the French organization and artillery were no better than that of their opponents, and, in the view of experience which was gathered then, and afterwards, it seems probable now that even had the whole of the British and French forces been united under one leader to strike one blow the time was not ripe for its success. Neither General Mangin nor General Micheler was in favour of the plan, and General Haig also dissented. Its success was further prejudiced by the withdrawal of the German lines in the spring of 1917, of which General Franchet d'Espérey's warning had been ignored by General Nivelle.

On the day preceding General Nivelle's attack the French line ran as follows:—from La Fère on the Oise round the edges of the forests of Gobain and Coucy to the Ailette, passing through Quincy on the northern and

Vauxaillon on the river's southern bank. Thence it passed west of Laffaux and Margival and crossed the Aisne, of which it left 8 miles, from Condé to Chavonne, in German possession. Behind this 8 miles was the key position of the Fort Condé, and the beginnings of the wooded spurs which constitute the heights of the Aisne. Where the line recrossed the river and the French stood on the north side of it, it passed Soupir and Moussy and a post above Troyon on the great hog's-back ridge which, with its road, is called the Chemin-des-Dames. The post had long ago remained a relic of the Battle of the Aisne, and of the part which Haig's corps played in it. The whole of the rest of the ridge, from Laffaux Mill and Allemant to Craonne, was held by the Germans. From Troyon the French line went off the ridge parallel to the Aisne for some distance, and then converging to cross it again at Berry-au-Bac, and proceed southwards and eastwards to Rheims below the heights of Nogent l'Abbesse and the Moronvilliers Ridge, to the River Suippe.

The Chemin-des-Dames Ridge, as a position, may be compared to a forearm and a fist, the knuckles of which—the spurs of the Aisne heights—are most difficult at the western end. The French held part of the Vregny plateau, which was opposite one of the spurs, Nanteuil-la-Fosse, and so were in good position to assault it. The other spurs, Fort de Condé, Vailly Spur, had the moat of the Aisne in front of them; and all the villages on the river, Condé, Celles, Vailly, as well as those in the crevices of the spurs. Aizy, Ostel, Sancy, Braye, were outer or inner bastions of the greater ridge fortress. If the ridge could have been carried at the western end the whole of the rest must have fallen. The eastern half of the knuckles was more vulnerable, because the French had already a footing on the eastern slopes of the Soupir and Moussy spurs, besides the post at Troyon and a good way up to Braye. But the knuckles called for an assault on both their western and eastern forces—12 miles of the most unassailable kind, of fortress forming a better situated Verdun, and better fortified, for the Germans had not been there three years doing nothing. East of this tremendous position was the hog's-back plateau narrowing at Hurtebise Farm, widening at Craonelle, narrowing again at the eastern extremity, where the California and Casemates plateau positions look down on Craonne. The slopes are very steep, but the difficulties not so immense as at the western end. The German position east of the Chemin-des-Dames Ridge fell from the high ground of fortified Craonne to a marshy plain broken only by the low hills of Ville-aux-Bois. Then, after the crossing of the Aisne at Berry-au-Bac, more flat country, with the heights of Brimont and Fresne standing out from it and bristling with German defences. Then came the Nogent l'Abbesse cluster, and the Moronvilliers *massif* east of Rheims. Nivelle's plan was to attack the great Chemin-des-Dames position west and east and south, getting into it anywhere he could while bursting into the Champagne plain on the low ground below it, between Craonne and the Brimont defences. That was the programme for 16th April. The next day another army was to attack the Moronvilliers heights on the other side of Rheims as a separate project.

If an historian of this enormous undertaking were to say that it broke down at the outset, he would convey a false impression, for the French by desperate effort gained some remarkable successes in a struggle which lasted from 16th April to 5th May. But the summary description would have a great deal of truth in it, for the first day sealed the fate of the attack as a decision; and the last left the Allies on the Western Front with Germany in a position where it seemed extremely unlikely that she could be beaten. When, the suggestion of political interference having been made, M. Painlevé was questioned as to who had "stopped" the attack, he replied that it was the Germans who had stopped it.

The artillery preparation had been long and severe, lasting from 6th to 16th April, but losing some of the effectiveness of crescendo which had been designed for it through rain and bad visibility. Rain and snow fell heavily before the attack, and the clouds were gathering when the first assault was

GENERAL DEBENEY

*From a photograph*

MARSHAL PÉTAIN

*From a photograph by Melcy*

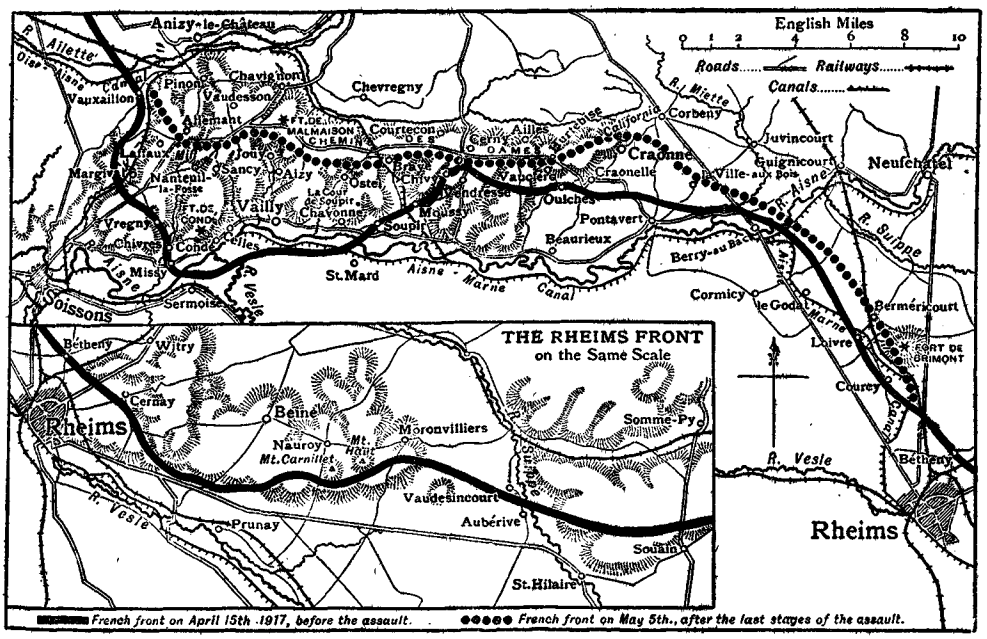
GENERAL NIVELLE

*From a photograph by Henri Manuel*

GENERAL DÉGOUTTE

*From a photograph*

delivered near the forest of Coucy, and was followed by the assault of a French colonial division at Laffaux. The division reached Vauxaillon and Laffaux, but could hold neither; the German counter-attack was immediate and effective. On the eastern side of the knuckle-like spurs of the great ridge the attack proceeded in a series of pulses, successive and sometimes parallel, so as to hold the Germans in suspense as to the point at which the greatest effort would be


English Miles
0 1 2 4 6 8 10
Roads..... Railways.....
Canals.....
THE RHEIMS FRONT
on the Same Scale
French front on April 15th 1917, before the assault.
French front on May 5th., after the last stages of the assault.

Map illustrating the French Attack on the Chemin-des-Dames Ridge, April 15–May 5, 1917

were sent to conquer these positions, and the result was to show that the defences were practically unassailable by swift assault. The bombardment, as was afterwards found, had killed many of the Germans who garrisoned the quarries, the trenches, the woods; and many of the defences had been blown to dust; but the strength of the position had hardly been reduced. Both divisions, their first objectives gained, were held up at the foot of one of the cliff-like pro-

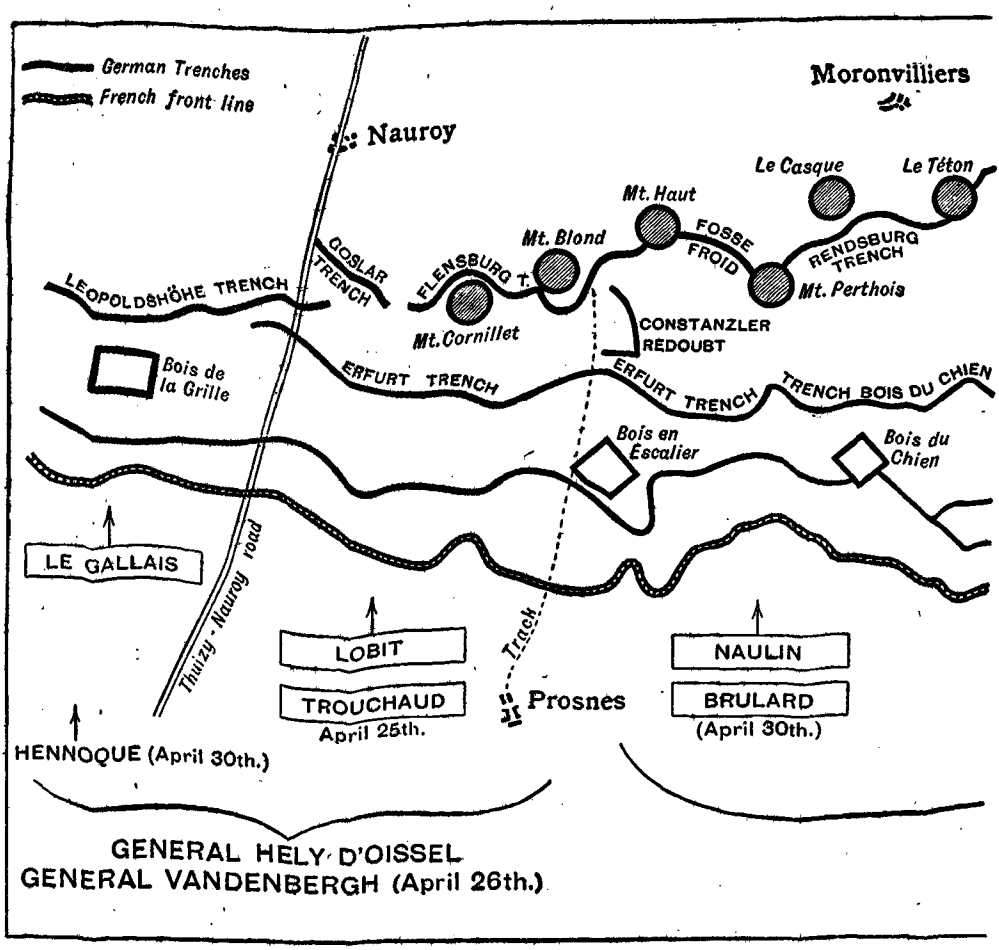
directed. General Nivelle did not press the frontal attack where the Germans had the Aisne to help them, but directed his effort on the ridge from Chavonne to Craonne. The capture of Chavonne was a necessary preliminary to the frontal attack, and its capture, together with that of the Soupir Ridge, would make the task of throwing the Germans back over the Aisne possible; without Chavonne such an effort would be abortive. The Germans had naturally fortified Chavonne to the teeth, and the cliffs behind it and behind Soupir village were pitted with caves and quarries, improved by tunnels, trenches, and wire.

Two French divisions of Mangin's army

jections called Les Grinons. A battalion of the left-hand division burst its way through Chavonne, and struggled on to the support-trench system which, if carried, would have unlocked the gate to Les Grinons. But the desperate rush was rendered futile by a German counter-attack. On the right hand of the attack a Chasseur battalion did better, for it bombed its way through the support trenches, sealed the position of Mont Sapin, and spread fanwise towards Les Grinons and Mont Soupir, a truly remarkable feat which it crowned by holding off the German counter-attack and maintaining its own position. This feat was supported by others less remarkable, but useful, which

gave the 2 divisions a footing on the slopes of Les Grinons, in Chavonne, and the approaches to Mont Soupir, as well as the actual possession of two lesser fortified heights. But the assault as a whole had been held up, both divisions had been very hard hit; the left-hand one badly mauled.

section of the assault, having run the gauntlet of the German fire over the marshy ground below Craonne, won a footing in the ruins of that place. The French *communiqué* at the end of the day claimed that all the first-line German positions had been captured, which was true. The German *communiqué*




Diagrammatic Representation of the Battle of Moronvilliers, April 17–May 20, 1917—continued on the opposite page

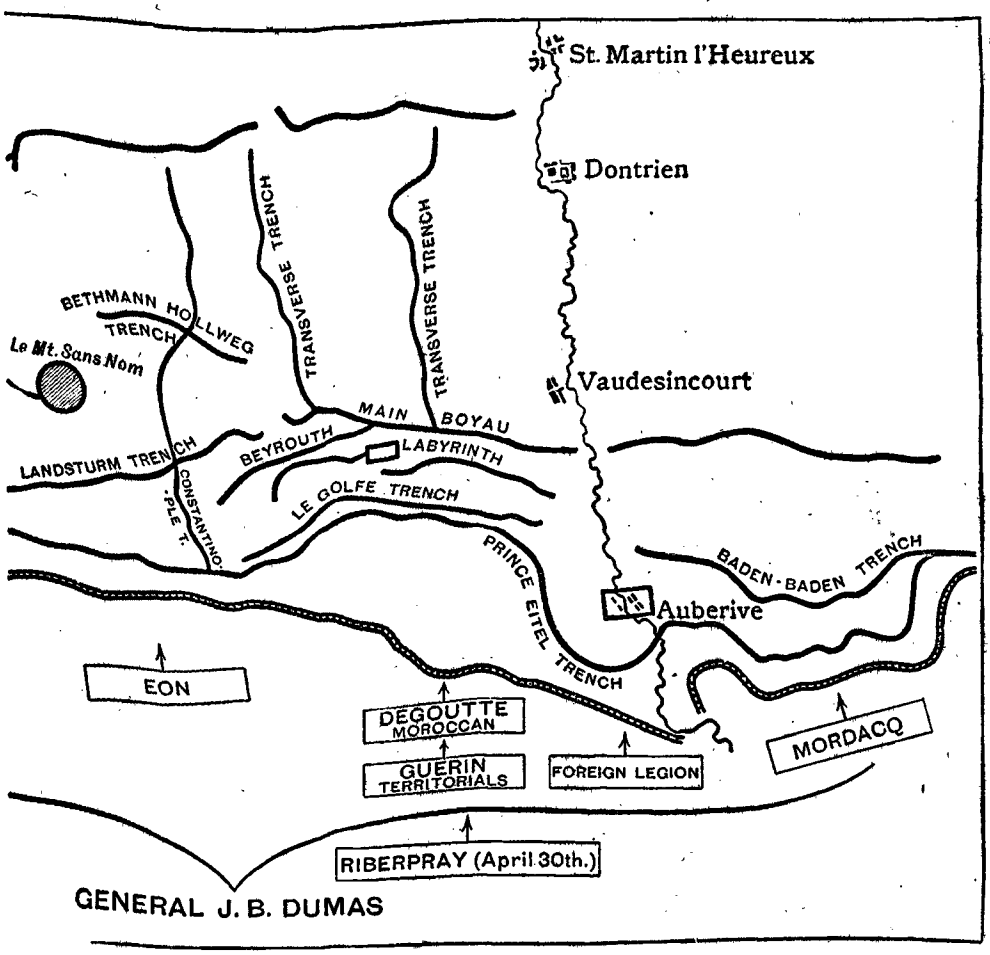
Three hours or less after this assault had gone forward others were directed at the Chemin-des-Dames Ridge itself, up the spur between Braye and Chivy, from the old foothold above Troyon, and on a wide front between that point and Craonne. The scale of the assault demanded 2 army corps. The highest point of the ridge was reached, Hurtebise Farm, and the most easterly

declared that assaults at most points on the ridge had been bloodily repulsed, which also was true. The losses at Laffaux and Chavonne had been very heavy, and what was worse, very dispiriting.

This assault was but one half of the Nivelle design. The other half of it embraced the thrust east of Craonne in the flat lands towards Juvincourt and Ville-aux-Bois,

and extended southwards beyond Berry-au-Bac to Berméricourt, and a point on the Aisne-Marne Canal opposite Brimont. The salient points at which the assault was directed between Craonne and the Aisne were the Bois des Buttes and the Bois des Boches (Ville-aux-Bois). South of the Aisne Dames was demolished, and there could be no break through. The prospect was reduced to that of a methodical advance. The French artillery support in this sector was not heavy enough. The Tanks of French type were a failure.

South of Berry-au-Bac and the Aisne, the




Diagrammatic Representation of the Battle of Moronvilliers, April 17–May 20, 1917—continued from the opposite page

and Berry-au-Bac were the corresponding Brimont obstacles, which Nivelle hoped to win by carrying Berméricourt and Loivre. On the north of the Aisne a famous Paris regiment (31st Infantry) took by assault the Bois des Buttes by six hours work, but could not turn the Bavarians out of Ville-aux-Bois. As Craonne was still German, neither pillar of the defence between the Chemin-des-

attack on the Brimont heights, which was to proceed by turning them at Berméricourt and Loivre, had a more encouraging success. A French division, operating from Le Godat, swarmed over the German front-line trenches, fought its way through the wood behind, and reached Berméricourt, spreading thence along the railway to Loivre, where it joined hands with another unit of the division

which had broken into and taken this fortified village. A brigade of Russians, acting in concert with this division, went forward to Courcy with great impetuosity, and despite severe losses (again complaint was made of insufficient artillery support) took and held the village and its château stronghold. The day's captures numbered 11,000.

A very great effort was made in the pouring rain of the next day (17th, when the front of assault was extended to Moronvilliers) to improve the ground won by throwing in reinforcements. The fighting ability of the French *poilu* was never better demonstrated, not even at Verdun. The costly obstacle of Les Grinons, changing hands many times, was surmounted by dusk, and its capture put the Germans in Chavonne in difficulties. The French also improved their hold of other points; but from Chavonne to Hurtebise, and from Craonne to Courcy, there was a pause in the advance, but no pause in the fighting, for all day long the Germans were in a position to react, and delivered many counter-attacks. But General Nivelle, true to his principles, had no intention of abandoning the initiative, and was bringing up reinforcements and advancing his artillery all day. On the 18th he let them loose on the German positions again. He won a success so striking, at the outset, that his plan almost seemed to have justified its cost. The infantry at Laffaux, protected by cavalry on their southern flank, broke through and crossed the plateau of Vregny and the valley beyond it, and finally stormed Nanteuil-la-Fosse on the adjacent height.

The effect of this capture was to dominate the Germans in the Fort de Condé just north of the river, and make the whole German position in the river salient precarious. It was made more precarious when one of Mangin's " Iron " divisions crossed the Aisne east of Condé, and, spreading east and west along the bank, gave helping hands to other troops crossing at Vailly. Vailly was occupied and held, the Saxon regiments of its garrison retreating to the wooded heights, but retreating too late. For Chavonne had been captured also on the eastern face of the group of spurs, and French troops marched down from it on Ostel, intercepting the Saxon regiments as they closed in. The German salient south of the Aisne was thus in effect wiped out. The position of the garrison still holding the Fort de Condé was further worsened by the capture of Braye and Chivy among the wooded spurs. A good deal of the difficult end of the Chemin-des-Dames Ridge had thus been successfully surmounted. The position of the easterly half of Nivelle's attack, in the plains, showed an improvement on that of the previous day. The Paris regiment completed its task at Ville-aux-Bois and the neighbouring wood: the Russians at Courcy pushed a little farther forward.* It was significant, however, that the Germans were able to launch a strong counter-attack from the neighbourhood of Juvincourt.

On the 19th the French reaped the fruit of their previous attacks at the western end of the Chemin-des-Dames, taking what was left of prisoners and ruins after the German garrison had blown up the Fort de Condé, and capturing also the last German remnants at Celles. By afternoon the French held the whole of the Aisne from the Oise to Berry-au-Bac. On the ridge the Germans were retreating to second positions, which, as a matter of subsequent fact, were strong enough to hold the French from such complete command of the ridge as would enable them to advance beyond it. The French furthermore occupied Aizy and Jouy, took a few more prisoners at Hurtebise Farm, and slightly improved their positions on the eastern side of the 50-mile attack. Operations of a similar kind, but slowing down further, occupied the next day. The French bolt had been shot: the Germans had recoiled under it, had lost men and ground in consequence, but were now closing up and already counter-attacking to give themselves time.

To the French Commander-in-Chief there was nothing left but to clear up. He had not the men to prosecute an adventure which in its opening stages had wrecked three of the army's finest divisions. For three years France had endured cruel losses; it was not willing to risk more; and indeed the situation was one which must have given pause to any

Allied statesman. It is conceivable, though it is not likely, that had General Nivelle been able to send in another attack comparable with the first, he might have broken through at some point of the Germans battered front. He took from them, in the fortnight which ended on 28th April, 21,000 prisoners and 175 guns; he had driven them back from the Aisne, and had wrested from their hands some of the strongest positions on the heights of the Aisne; but everywhere the command of the position had been but half won. Though sections of the Chemin-des-Dames Ridge were in French hands, the German strong positions behind the western end offered opportunities for very long defence; Craonne was still in dispute, and therefore no eastwards push could be made towards the plain between there and Ville-aux-Bois. From Ville-aux-Bois southwards, the German first- and second-line defences had been pierced, but there were other defences behind, and the Brimont heights were an insuperable obstacle. French military opinion was against going on; the *moral* of the army had had too severe a strain put on it; the civilians, as represented by the Chamber of Deputies, were appalled by the losses. Finally, the situation at sea, where the German submarine campaign had achieved a success which was never publicly admitted, but which had caused dismay to the stoutest optimists, was such that it would have been folly to take the risk of putting the last French stake on the table. In a word, the Nivelle plan of campaign had failed. The chief command was shortly afterwards taken over temporarily by General Pétain, and about the middle of May by General Foch. General Nivelle, a fine soldier and a man of the highest character and the most unassailable dignity, retired to a command in Algeria, and, true to the best traditions of the French army, neither excused himself nor explained.

The rest of the story of the attack on the Chemin-des-Dames is of a different character. The French High Command having got a foothold, endeavoured so to secure and improve it as to worsen the Germans' position, and compel them so to expend men in counter-attacks as to make the balance of loss of men one that would be in the Allies' favour. By the end of April it leaned heavily against the French, despite their captures of prisoners, for the destruction of the 3 divisions in the fighting of the first day was naturally but a fraction of the losses; by the end of the year it was probably against the Germans. Together with the endeavour to improve the Chemin-des-Dames positions was a scientific and carefully developed advance on the Moronvilliers heights, the attack on which had begun on the second day (17th April), and had been attended with limited success. That sector is best treated as a whole and separately.

The first new tactics at the Chemin-des-Dames were put into operation on 4th–5th May. An attack was set in motion on a 2½-mile front in the plain below Craonne; and while this was in progress another assault, delivered on Craonne itself, succeeded by its daring. Two companies went right through the ruins and reached the California plateau beyond. There they stuck, despite all efforts to crush them by gun-fire; and they formed a nucleus for an extension of the position. Next day a new French bombardment broke out all along the ridge from Vauxaillon to Craonne; and then two furious but localized attacks were delivered at either extremity of the position. That at Vauxaillon end was most bloody, for here, on the way to the Fort de Malmaison, were systems of trenches interlacing the quarries of Fruty and Allemant, and forming grids of obstacles in front of and behind such vital points as Laffaux Mill. There was no way of holding a trench except by cleaning it up with bombs, but the fighting had at any rate the advantage that the prize of victory went to the individualist. The fighting went on over 5th May till Sunday, 6th May. By that time the hill in front of Malmaison had been all but won, yet not quite. Allemant quarries had been won and lost again; Laffaux Mill had been won and held. At the other end of the ridge the holding at Craonne was extended till a valuable stretch of the ridge as far as Cerny was strongly gripped. By 6th May the forearm of the ridge was mainly commanded by the French. Below it, by the capture of Ville-aux-Bois and its two heights,

they had put a key in the lock of the plain of Laon, but had little prospect of turning it.

At this juncture the grand assault gave place to the scientific methodical advance as planned by Pétain and his school. It may be conveniently, if not chronologically followed, by summarizing, firstly, the rest of the year's operations on the Chemin-des-Dames. After General Nivelle had stationed the French on the hog's back, the Germans for three and a half months never ceased to dispute possession of the ground. On the 18-miles front no fewer than 49 German divisions were put in and withdrawn; and from 20th August to 23rd October there were seldom more than a few days' intermission in the struggle for the California plateau, the narrow foothold at Hurtebise Farm, and the numerous caves, quarries, and trenches which were the natural or artificial features of the limestone ridge. The greater number of these were in the German ground between Vauxaillon and the Chevregny Spur at the western end of the ridge. Between these two points was the dismantled forts of Malmaison—less important as a stronghold than the quarries of Montparnasse, several acres in extent—and of Bohery, to the north and south. On 24th October, when the assault at Malmaison was delivered, the Germans were still engaged in the task of linking up the three points by underground galleries. The French attack anticipated their completion, and the French heavy guns had done a great deal to destroy them. Behind were elaborate triple lines running from the height of the Mont des Singes, and along the summit of the plateau which stands above Laffaux, thence pursuing their battle-line eastwards in front of another quarry (Fruty) and so as also to cover Malmaison Farm, Bohery Quarry, and Malmaison Fort. They ended on the Chevregny Spur. The position was shaped like an oak leaf with ravines in between the serrations; and the ravines had to be surmounted, for while the Germans held the Mont des Singes fortifications the position could not be turned from the west by a movement past Vauxaillon up the Ailette valley. The position had to be assaulted frontally; and, strong as it was topographically, it was amply garrisoned by 7 German divisions under General Müller.

General Maistre was entrusted by General Pétain with the task of surmounting the caverned plateau with its four spurs, with General Franchet d'Espérey as adviser. Three army corps were employed in the enterprise. That of General Marjoulet (14th Army Corps) embraced the largest sector from below Vauxaillon to south of Allemant; it was committed to the task of reaching the plateau at Allemant, which was therefore to be used as a pivot for assailing the German support-trenches on the northern slopes of the ridge. The next corps (21st), under General Dégoutte, was to master the German defences at the south-western buttresses of the Malmaison plateau, and pass north and west of Malmaison Fort to Malmaison Farm, and to the Montparnasse Quarry. On the right was General de Maud'huy, with the 11th Army Corps, comprising the African division under Guyot de Salins of Verdun, the Alpine Chasseurs, and part of the 39th Division. The African division was asked to take the Bohery Quarry, the Fort, and press on to Chavignon. The 39th Division was to help the Chasseurs to expel the 5th Division of the Prussian Guard from the eastern end of the Malmaison plateau. Such was Pétain's plan, and the French left nothing to chance in carrying it out. A preliminary bombardment, terrific even in those days of devastating shell-fire, lasted seventy hours; it was noticeable for its use of gas-shells, which were very effective in the cramped quarries and wooded ravines. It could not make the task easy, or sweep out of every crevice the resolute German defence; but the whole plan was so well-designed that the battle, to which the French gave the name of Malmaison, remains a model of co-ordination and skill.

Marjoulet's corps carried in succession the Laffaux position, Allemant village, and the plateau north of it, though not without some mishaps, several delays, and some of that severe fighting which results from the undestroyed machine-gun position. But the programme was forced through, and Marjoulet, wheeling round at Allemant to join Dégoutte's troops in the centre, laid the

foundation of the complete success of the design. Dégoutte had also kept to the time-table. Three hours after his line had been set in motion it had captured Malmaison Farm, and had worked its way, joining hands with Marjoulet's right, to press onwards to the Montparnasse Quarry. On Dégoutte's right, General Maud'huy had taken the Bohery Quarry with Guyot Salins' Africans, and the Zouaves, advancing with their colonel and their chaplain at their head, stormed Fort Malmaison and completed the capture of the château. The Chasseurs and their colleagues of the 39th Division had hustled the Prussian Guard off the plateau, and then wheeled westwards to join the movement towards Chavignon.

This success, one of the most conspicuous examples of the limited offensive which Pétain had preached, gathered in 11,000 prisoners, 180 guns, and a very large quantity of material. It brought to the French a Pisgah view of the towers of Laon, and though it cannot have been achieved without cost, it was a heartening exploit at a time when the Italian disaster at Caporetto was to cast a blight over prospects which had never been bright throughout the summer. Because of that disaster, and because the Allies, having escaped the most threatening consequences of the German submarine campaign, had now to await and expect the culminating German blow on the Western Front, it was impracticable to exploit General Maistre's victory further. Chavignon, Pinon, and the Pinon Forest, the next obstacles, had to be left alone, and the positions were organized against the attempt that would surely come to retake them. That attempt did not arrive till next June, when all the positions, won with such devotion, sacrifice, and genius, were abandoned almost without an attempt to retain them. They served their purpose, nevertheless, although it was not the original purpose of securing positions for the advance towards Laon. While the French held them, they interposed a barrier between the concerted advance of the two wings of the German army, so that in Ludendorff's spring offensive of 1918, the first great effort had to be made so as to secure its greatest effect on one side, and on one side only of them.

General Nivelle's April offensive had embraced yet another bastion, the *massif* of Moronvilliers on the eastern side of Rheims, which was destined to play a not dissimilar part in 1918, by enabling General Gouraud to effect an elastic recoil behind it, when, in July, Ludendorff's last throw, the double advance on either side of Rheims, was made. The Moronvilliers position is one of great natural strength, a group of seven hills west of the Suippe, forming a kind of double ridge to which six hills contribute, while the seventh, the Mont Sans Nom, stands on the southern side of a wide hollow as an outlier. The heights of the ridge, divided into pairs of threes, are, reading west to east, Mont Cornillet, Mont Blond, Mont Haut, and Monts Perthois, Le Casque, Le Téton. It is needless to dilate on the military engineering which the Germans had expended on this position, which they had furthermore taken the utmost precautions to secure from the risk of being turned. On the west a network of trenches covered the Thuizy-Nauroy road, which passed the western boundary, and a wood, the Bois de la Grille, was converted into another, and a most effective obstacle. On the east was a similar scientific system of protection on either side of the river Suippe, the slopes leading up from which to the ridge were ploughed crosswise by trenches. This stronghold had a front of 10 miles: and the French front-line trenches were close to the Germans. Taking Mont Haut (400 feet) as a hypothetical objective, a storming line would have to attack uphill for 2 miles, and the attack would everywhere be frontal. Moreover, the hills were so situated as to afford natural enfilading positions.

Such was the problem which General Nivelle had set General Anthoine and the Fourth French Army who faced it. Under General Anthoine, General Hély d'Oissel commanded a left wing of 2 divisions and a regiment, and General J. B. Dumas had rather more than 3 divisions on the right wing. The Germans, who realized in the second week of April from the bombardment with which Anthoine deluged them, that an assault, however audaciously, was meditated, took no risks but garrisoned their position

with 40,000 men, and brought up their artillery to some 1000 guns. Anthoine, himself an old artilleryman, had a convinced belief in his own artillery, and in the six and a half days' bombardment, from 10th April to the 17th, reduced the German front line to a scrap-heap, and had wrecked the easterly half of the second line. But on the western side of the position the German second line lay behind the Bois de la Grille, and had not been crushed—far from it. Nor had the works on the western trio of hills, or the tunnels sunk in them, been put out of action. Consequently, any flank movement of the French towards the west was seriously prejudiced before General Hély d'Oissel's troops left their trenches: and this proved, in practice, fatal to the early success of the plan, because success hinged on the westward assault.

On the western side, General d'Oissel was to attack La Grille Wood, Mont Cornillet, and Mont Blond: General Dumas had the rest of the front, from Mont Haut to the Suippe, as his share of the assault. It is more than doubtful whether there were enough troops for the end in view; it is certain that the artillery should have been heavier, and its preparations more complete. The preparation failed on the extreme west of the attack, where La Grille Wood and the Leopoldshöhe trench behind it had been assigned to a division under Le Gallais. The reputation which Le Gallais' division had won at Verdun is sufficient guarantee that no troops could have done better. But though, advancing up the open incline, remnants of battalions got through the wood, the machine-gun fire from the redoubt in the wood, and from the Leopoldshöhe trench in front, and another enfilading trench on the right, cut them down to companies. Some got to the Leopoldshöhe trench, but they could not hold their ground unsupported, and it was a defeated division which fell back to the southern half of the wood, and clung there. In the subsequent operations Gallais' men held their ground for three days, but by that time the Germans were fully awake to the French intentions on their wing, and locked the door with reinforcements.

The failure here was not redeemed by, though it found compensation in, the advance of Hély d'Oissel's right-wing division (General Lobit), which in two hours had got into all the second line Erfurt trench-system (which prolonged the Leopoldshöhe trench on the open slopes), except on the west, where their flank was exposed by the failure of Gallais' division. Nevertheless, the division moved onwards to Monts Cornillet and Blond, and a regiment reached the crest of the first. The parallel regiment was held up in front of Mont Blond by the Flensburg trench-system (behind Mont Cornillet and in front of Mont Blond): and General Lobit's position was one of some peril. He could not, of course, hold Mont Cornillet, the tunnel of which was vomiting German reserves, and he had hard work to maintain the unguarded western flank. He brought up his field batteries just in time, and on that day, and for four days more, clung to the slopes of the position assailed.

General Lobit's division could have done better, especially on the eastward side, if General Naulin's division of Africans and Zouaves could have advanced in correspondence. But this inner right-wing division, which should have got well up the slopes of Mont Haut and Mont Perthois, got no farther than the continued Erfurt trench-system, and was prevented from further advance by the enfilading fire with which it was threatened from the untaken Constanzler Redoubt, separating it from General Naulin's division. This position remained untaken all day on the 17th. It was reduced by heavy howitzers early next morning, and the African division then went forward like a stream which has been undammed. The way was further prepared for it by a shelling of the heights, and by dusk a company of Zouaves stood on the higher crest of Mont Haut. They stayed there, and were joined on the companion crest next morning by other troops. It was a culminating effort, and it proved impossible to improve on it by ejecting the Germans from the trenches which joined Mont Haut to Mont Perthois, so that gradually the French grip was unloosed by the unremitting attacks which 2 fresh German divisions, thrown in for

the purpose, delivered during the next few days.

General Eon's troops, on the right of Naulin's Africans, had made slower progress, and these 2 regiments, committed to the task of reaching the heights of Le Casque and Le Téton, had a very trying time. Their progress was first enfiladed from a wood at the foot of the outlying Mont Sans Nom, and that kept them off the hills till evening. They tried again under better conditions on the 18th—once more to be enfiladed, this time from Mont Perthois. But on the 19th a regiment got up to the Rendsburg trench, there to be received with machine-guns; and another fought its way to, and back and forth on, the crest of Le Téton. The next day was a repetition of the 19th, a furious struggle for crests that were hardly won before a German counter-attack from untaken support-trenches wrested them back. Le Casque could not be held; Le Téton was held partially.

On the other and less vital half of the battle-field General Dégoutte's Moroccan division did well towards Mont Sans Nom, the crest of which it rushed; but the Landsturm trench-system, which led to the huge maze protecting the eastern face of the Moronvilliers slopes, was not subdued till nightfall. The Foreign Legion, which constituted General Dégoutte's right wing, had nothing before it but hard going, trench after trench, system after system, of which the names, the Labyrinth, Beyrouth, Byzance, the Main Boyau, were significant of gains that had to be made yard by yard. The turning-point towards success did not come till the 19th, when some men of Mordacq's division which had attacked on either side of the Suippe, entered Auberive, and the Foreign Legion stormed the Labyrinth and Main Boyau systems, and so placed Vaudesincourt in jeopardy. Further advance here would have given a promise of turning the position. But at the end of a week's fighting General Anthoine's forces were still knocking at the door, and the Germans held positions on Mont Cornillet, Mont Haut, Mont Perthois, and Le Casque, from which they could still launch damaging counter-attacks. It is hardly to be denied that the cost had been excessive, and the losses inflicted on some of the best fighting divisions had to be added to the toll of the Nivelle offensive.

But the position could not be left as it was; the French were bound to go on, and they were fortunate in having the right men and leaders to do so. It was especially necessary that the stumbling-block of the Bois de la Grille and the Leopoldshöhe trench should be removed, however determined the Germans might be to retain them. On 26th April, General Vandenbergh took command of the whole left wing, and he was supplied with fresh divisions. General Gallais' hard-tried veterans were withdrawn, and a division under General Hennoque was given the task which they had begun. This division advanced to the assault on 30th April, when there was not the faintest possibility of rushing the defences, or surprising the German garrison which manned them. It had accordingly to fight its way through crater and concrete pill-box, and to continue to do so for eight days. By that time it had surmounted the last redoubt in the wood, and killed or captured the last German in the Leopoldshöhe trench. It had not been alone in its bitter task. On the other side of the road from Thuizy to Nauroy a fresh division, under General Trouchaud, struggled day by day till 4th May in the attempt to seize the Flensburg trench, which was the key to Mont Cornillet. It was not to be done. Mont Cornillet's tunnel was a volcano ready always to pour out a lava flow of Germans for the counter-attack.

The next division on the right, also new, and commanded by General Brulard, had a rather better success in improving General Naulin's uncompleted work. On 30th April its violent assault on Mont Haut, Mont Perthois and its tunnel, and on the Fosse Froid trench, suffered heavy losses at Mont Haut, but did succeed in blocking the Mont Perthois tunnel, and in taking part of the Fosse Froid trench. It was supported by the work of Eon's division on the right; but it could do no more under the momentum of its assault, and again the attack was hung up, this time for a fortnight. Then, on 20th May, after another fierce bombardment, 3 more divisions, or portions of them, were

thrown into the furnace of Moronvilliers, a general attack being directed against the whole position from Mont Cornillet to Le Téton, but with Mont Cornillet as the object of the most concentrated effort. That effort was successful. Mont Cornillet was taken, its tunnel captured. Thus, with the greater part of the position taken, and the rest rendered useless to the Germans as a base from which to attack, the Moronvilliers action ceased. From first to last, 17th April to 20th May, 6000 German prisoners had been taken, and it is more than doubtful whether in any ordinary circumstances this could have been held to recompense the French for the losses they had endured in taking them. They had, however, inflicted almost equally heavy losses on the German counter-attacking forces, and the effort, like others, had occupied and worn down a number of German divisions.

The Moronvilliers attack, as already has been noted, is attached chronologically to the first part of the Soisson-Rheims offensive, of which the greater parts were the assaults on the Chemin-des-Dames Ridge, and in the Aisne-Berry-au-Bac plains. The second Chemin-des-Dames attack, apart from its character as a scientific action, was an attempt to pin as many German divisions as possible to the Western Front, and in part an insurance against the next year's German offensive. Another battle was fought which in many of these aspects resembled it, and is conveniently described as the Fourth Battle of Verdun. The object of the French was to throw back the Germans to the position occupied by them before the offensive of von Falkenhayn of February, 1916. Von Gallwitz, the German army group commander in this region, was suspicious of the French intention as early as August. The French commander opposed to him was General Guillaumat, whose coadjutor was General Fayolle, the originator of the timed, creeping barrage; and these two were supported by General Pétain with the men and artillery necessary for carrying out the schemes (which had been laid down by General Nivelle) to recover the lost ground completely. Till August these forces had not been available; they may be stated as being equivalent to those with which von Gallwitz was provided for defence in respect of infantry. The French had a superiority in artillery and air-craft.

Von Gallwitz's position, in face of a probable French attack, suffered from the defect of being cut in half by the Meuse, so that unless he had a large superiority in men he would have to transfer troops to defend himself against a heavy attack in the alternate sectors across bridges subjected to French artillery fire. His lines extended on the west of the Meuse in a shallow semi-circle from Avocourt, and its much contested wood, over Hill 304 and the Mort Homme, thence dipping forward in a small salient between two hills before reaching back to cover Cumières, the wood of Cumières, and the Corbeaux Wood, and the Côte de l'Oie behind. The hills on this side offered no wooded shelter, but were bare, and the slopes of Hill 304 and the Mort Homme were separated from the new northerly hill defences on this side of the Forges brook—another defect in the absence of numerical preponderance in the defence. The Mort Homme and Hill 304 were similarly separated by the Esnes brook. Thus, everywhere on this side the defender was unable to keep his trenches lightly manned; defenders could not be brought up, or transferred rapidly, to threatened points after the first impact of assault, but on the contrary must be posted in first-line trenches and redoubts. The "elastic retirement", that favoured device, could not be practised west of the Meuse, because its operations would uncover positions east of the Meuse. On that side of the river where Nivelle's last Verdun offensive in 1916 had left the French well posted for further attack, the German lines went over the Côte de Talou in the bend of the Meuse, but the French were in front of Vacherauville, the Côte de Poivre, Louvemont, and Bezonvaux, thence turning sharply south to the Meuse heights over the Woevre plain. If, however, the German defensive line was topographically faulty, von Gallwitz had spared no pains to improve it artificially. Besides the colossal array of pill-boxes, pits, gun emplacements, and redoubts, he had constructed tunnels on the Moronvilliers

model between the two summits of the Mort Homme, and behind the Bismarck Tunnel ran the Crown Prince Tunnel, 800 feet long.

The German guns were well placed, well protected, and numerous. They were not better served than those of the French, who in 1917 had plenty of ammunition, and an ample provision of heavy siege-guns. The French artillery had been brought to a high pitch of excellence under General Framiatte, whose 15-inch guns and 10-inch howitzers pitted the German hills with shell-holes which overlapped, and searched the tunnels, redoubts, and emplacements with gas-shells. The French air-craft work was as good in defence as in spotting, and it is asserted that von Gallwitz was left in ignorance till the last moment of the side of the Meuse on which the principal attack was to be launched. Framiatte's long preliminary bombardment culminated in a twelve-hours' gun-fire, which lasted till the thick misty dawn of 20th August.

The mist, artificially reinforced by a smoke-barrage, was in favour of the French method, all carefully rehearsed and exactly timed beforehand, so that within an hour and a half the points assigned to the assaulting divisions west of the Meuse had been reached. The keenest thrust was first delivered at the extreme left of Avocourt Wood, the clearance of which by General Linder's division began at five o'clock in the morning, and from which, as on a pivot, the assault spread eastwards with something of the aspect of a rolling-up movement. Avocourt Wood being secured, the division on the right of it was able to go forward towards Hill 304 without fear of being outflanked. Hill 304 was not directly assaulted; the division from the Avocourt Wood direction flowed past one side of it; another division (31st, General Martin) pushed the Prussian division (von Dietrich) on the other side of it back towards the Mort Homme; but not many reached it. Nearer to the river the French Foreign Legion, transferred from Moronvilliers, took Cumières on the Corbeaux Wood, and reached the line of the Forges brook. The day's results on this side of the river were that the Germans had been pushed back in disorder, and were left with no coherent line to retain the hills on which their garrison yet stood. They did not counter-attack till late in the day.

On the east side of the river the day's limited objectives were all secured. These were the Talou Ridge and the loop of the Meuse which cupped it, both taken by General Matthieu's division. The German barrage was very poor, and the French losses were remarkably light. On Matthieu's right, General St. Marmont's division took Hill 344; the 186th Division (General Caron), and the 42nd Division (Deville), stormed Hill 240, and laid the foundation for the forthcoming advance on Fosse and Chaume Woods. This and the other projected advances were prepared with as much forethought as the first (and most successful) thrust. General Guillaumat methodically consolidated his positions on the eastern side while holding off counter-attacks, and on the west he was able to use artillery to enlarge his gains, for he had Hill 304 at his mercy. He battered it from a distance, and kept German reinforcements from reaching it by a barrage which could be directed from the position won by the French on its neighbour, the Mort Homme. The Germans held on till the 24th, and then were hustled off it and out of the defences on its northern slopes. This took General Linder's division right up to the Forges brook between Malancourt and Bethincourt. At daybreak of the 25th, General Carusart's division moved up from the Mort Homme to the same level. Lastly, the redoubts at Bethincourt were stormed, and on the west of the Meuse the French were then close to the original line of 1915.

If these gains were to be kept, however, further action on the eastern side of the river must be taken to conform to them. The momentum of the first surprise had gone; the further necessary gains had to be made methodically and piecemeal. A well concerted attack by Caron's and Deville's divisions took the whole of Fosse Wood and Beaumont Wood on the 26th, and successfully threw back von Gallwitz's counter-attack. At this date the French had taken 10,000 prisoners; but a break in the weather reinforced the reasons already suggested for

a postponement of further assaults. The postponement lasted till 8th September, when Guillaumat sent forward General Passaga's army corps, with 2 fresh divisions, to capture the Caurières Wood, between Beaumont and Caurières, which overlook those twin hills of Ornes where the heaviest German artillery was ensconced, and which form a natural barrier to the plain of the Woevre. This was by no means an unambitious project, and von Gallwitz threw in all the men he could collect to resist the assault. Passaga was, however, not to be denied, and after a severe struggle the division under Riberpray burst through Chaume Wood, took the Caurières Spur, and beat off the German counter-attack.

Von Gallwitz, whose experience hitherto in this battle had been one of uninterrupted failure, could not leave the terrain without at least one effort, for which he had had more than a fortnight to prepare, to recover it. He launched a counter-attack on a large scale (10th September) which was designed to capture Hill 344, a spur of the Poivre Ridge, and with this as lever to retake Talou Ridge. The design was good; the counter-attack excellently organized, but it met, in the divisions of Generals Hennoque and Philipot, seasoned veterans who were more than capable of resisting it. It ended in a costly German failure, and, another counter-attack at the Caurières Spur having also failed, von Gallwitz's command at Verdun was abruptly ended by the arrival from army head-quarters of General Ludendorff himself. Von Gallwitz was succeeded by General von Kühne, and, as far as the French plans were concerned, the fourth Battle of Verdun here ended. General Guillaumat had not won back all he desired or intended. On the western side of the Meuse he had thrown the Germans back to their old positions, but on the eastern side they were still 2 miles in advance of them; and the French had not been able to make any advance into the plains of the Woevre. Nevertheless, he had done a great deal. Here, as at Moronvilliers and the Chemin-des-Dames, the French had effected a reinsurance against the German offensive of the culminating months of the war, and had in fact done more, because, when, in September, 1918, the Americans under General Pershing reduced the St. Mihiel salient below Verdun, the flattened line from the Caurières Spur to the heights of the Meuse became a new and lively threat to the continuity of the German defence.

The German share of the Fourth Battle of Verdun did not end with the cessation of the French offensive. The new commander, Von Kühne, attempted to justify his appointment by improving the situation which he had taken over. He could see the threat of the salient that had been formed at the Caurières Spur, and he was also conscious that von Gallwitz's attempt to turn the Talou Ridge by the capture of Hill 344 was sound. Consequently, he delivered a number of attacks with the object of reducing the salient or capturing the hill. These attacks were seldom delivered on a front of more than 2 miles, and if they produced no results they certainly kept the French fully occupied. The first such attack was made on 11th September and the last on 10th November, and there were ten in all. Between 20th August and 10th November the Germans, first under von Gallwitz and then under von Kühne, had put 24 German divisions into the line. Von Kühne did nothing more to redeem the previous failure than to take back, at the cost of some hundreds of lives, a few trenches on the northern slopes of Hill 344, and on the eastern face of the St. Caurières salient, between Chaume Wood and Bezonvaux.

# CHAPTER XIII

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT, 1916–17

Towards the end of 1916, despite the heavy losses in the Battle of the Somme by the British, and the slow recovery of the French from the ordeal of Verdun, there was in both armies and both countries a rising note of confidence which revealed itself not merely in the utterances of public men, but in the preparations made at the Paris Conference of November, 1916, for the offensive of the spring to follow. This confidence was rudely shaken by the course of the early French offensive, the imperfect success of which could not be concealed, and by the growing realization that Russia was going out of the war. There was yet another cause for alarm, though this was carefully concealed from the public, and, as far as possible, from the Germans, and that was the effectiveness of the new U-boat campaign, which in April, 1917, threatened to starve Great Britain into submission within six months unless some new support in the offensive measures against submarines intervened. That support was forthcoming ultimately in the form of United States destroyers, which released for submarine hunting a number of the British destroyers which till then had to be kept as a screen for the Grand Fleet in the event of a sally of the German High Seas Fleet from its harbours. But while the situation was thus improved at sea, the prospect with which 1916 had closed, that combined pressure on the British, French, Russian, and Italian fronts must squeeze the Central Powers into submission and end the war before the end of 1917, had entirely vanished, to be replaced by one in which it was only too evident that Great Britain, with the help of France, would have to hold the Western Front against superior German forces until such time as a United States army in training could bring about a new balance of military power. The optimism in December, 1916, the apprehension in December, 1917, were both attributable to the course of events on the Russian front.

In the winter of 1915, when the great retreat was at an end, and while the Grand Duke Nicholas, who had been most shortsightedly replaced by the Tsar as Commander-in-Chief, was reaping the reflected glory of General Yudenitch's advance on Erzerum (16th February, 1916), the Russian front was re-arranged under the direction of the Tsar's Chief of Staff, General Alexieff. The Russian armies of the north were placed under the command of General Kuropatkin, who emerged from his retirement, and General Evert, who had handled the retreat from the line of the Niemen and the Warsaw salient so well. Kuropatkin's section was from Riga to Dvinsk, where a new attack by Hindenburg was a probability, and under him were the Twelfth, Fifth, and First Armies. General Evert had for the task of holding the sector from Vilna to the Pripet Marshes the Second, Tenth, Fourth, and Third Armies. These armies may in all have amounted to 45 infantry and 8 cavalry divisions. It is certain that the Russian High Command was enlisting very large numbers of recruits, more than could, in fact, be trained, equipped, and fed. The last-named consideration was one of the causes which contributed to the discontent in Russia.

In the southern group of armies, commanded by General Ivanoff ti April, when he went to Head-quarters, and thereafter by General Brussiloff, were the Rovno army (Eighth) under General Kaledin, the Eleventh Army, on the borders of Volhynia and Podolie, under General Sakharoff, the army of Eastern Galicia (Seventh) under General Scherbatcheff, and General Lechitsky's army (Ninth) on the Dniester. This group was of about the same strength numerically as the northern armies. Facing the northern group of Russian armies were forces mainly German and directed by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Armies under von Bülow and von Scholtz threatened the front from Riga to Dvinsk; Von Eichorn (Lake Narotch region), von Fabeck, and von

Woyrsch (with an Austrian army corps) were distributed along the rest of the northern sector. Prince Leopold of Bavaria's troops formed a species of connecting-link between the northern group of German armies and the Austrian armies which faced General Brussiloff. The more northerly group was in Volhynia; the southern one in Galicia and Bukovina. The Volhynian district was held by General Pulhallo von Brlog (Third Austro-Hungarian Army); the front from Lutsk to Dubno, facing Rovno, by the Fourth Army (Archduke Josef Ferdinand). Supporting them were a stiffening reserve under the German General von Linsingen. Farther south were General Boehm-Ermolli's army (Second) and the 2 armies of Generals Bothmer and von Pflanzer-Baltin. These Austro-Hungarian armies in the spring of 1916 amounted in the aggregate to some twenty Austrian and two German divisions, and were very much outnumbered by the Russians. They were, however, well entrenched; the system of communications, and army supply behind them, had been very well organized; and they were incomparably better off for artillery.

In this year of 1916 the initiative was taken and retained by Russian strategy. In the spring they forestalled a German offensive on the northern sector by an attack which, however costly and unproductive it may have been to themselves, fully occupied the German attention, and left the Russians comparatively unobserved while they matured their second and chief blow in the southern sector against the thinner and less resistant Austrian lines. The projected first thrust of General Evert against von Eichorn was masked by independent attacks at a point very distant from it, namely in the Southern Tarnopol sector, where General Scherbatcheff fought fiercely for a crossing of the Dniester at Oscieszko (February and March).

But Evert's offensive was on a much larger scale. It was directed against the army of von Eichorn; and the first assault, made with 3 army corps, attacked between Lake Narotch and Lake Vishnevsky, where the road leads to Vilna. The Germans were well posted on sloping ground naturally fenced in by bog, and improved according to the German method. General Baluyeff, who had command of the assault, was much better furnished with artillery than was usual with Russian armies; but his chief strength lay in the courage and persistence of the troops he commanded. The assault was renewed eight times between 18th March and 14th April, and on the right of the advance, separated from the left by natural obstacles of bog and marsh, a mile of ground was won. The losses were 12,000; the chief reason for supposing that they were warranted was that Evert's plan had pinned the Germans to this sector and had prevented them from undertaking hostile action elsewhere. But 12,000 was not the full extent of the Russian losses before the episode closed, or, rather, before the Germans allowed it to be closed. The positions won were not secured, and they were unduly denuded of the supporting artillery: so that when the German counter-attack was set in motion on 28th April—with no shortage of guns or ammunition—the unfortunate Russian infantry were once again compelled hopelessly to face an attack which no infantry in the world could, or should, have been expected to sustain. The second battle of Lake Narotch may be summarized by saying that the Germans fought with their guns, and the Russians fought with their lives. The heaviest losses fell on the regiments which had done best and suffered most in the previous assaults. In a day the whole advantages of General Baluyeff's advance were wiped out. Something more was also wiped out, and it was the blind confidence of the Russian infantryman in his general. This episode was one of the many seeds that were to germinate later.

The important part of the Russian campaign of 1916 did not, however, take place on this front, but was directed by General Brussiloff south of the Pripet. It was an attack which differed entirely from the German in method, and was necessarily dependent not on overwhelming artillery, though it was fairly well supplied with guns, but on the numbers, and the, as yet, unshaken resolution of the Russian soldier. A Russian general could not command the concentration of artillery which had enabled

von Mackensen in 1915 to level the defences of Radko Dmitrieff, or even those by which von Eichorn had blown back the Russians from the ground they had won at Lake Narotch. He could depend on, at the most, a substantial artillery preparation before sending his troops over an extended front. When the front, as in Brussiloff's problem, was between 200 and 300 miles, his chief weapon must be not guns, but men. The problem was to be solved by an attack along a front so wide that the enemy would find himself unable to swing reinforcements from one threatened point to another, and so might fail at some sector to withstand the attack. Such tactics did not usually succeed against German armies, or German commanders, both because these were usually too alert, and because their mobility, whether conferred by means of transport, or by marching ability and organization, was too good. It was different with the Austrians, whose staff work was not so good, though the Austro-Hungarian armies were far from deserving the contumely heaped on them by German generals, from Ludendorff downwards. Ludendorff's opinion of them was expressed by saying that in the Austrian Alliance Germany was bound to a corpse. But the failure of Austro-Hungarian armies was due in the greatest degree not to want of unity of purpose in the leadership, but to want of unity in the rank and file, who were of heterogeneous nationality, diverse and often opposed aims, and whose *moral*, both on this front and on the Italian front, was never fully to be depended on.

Brussiloff's plan spread a very heavy pressure over a number of sectors simultaneously, and it owed its success to the complete co-ordination of all the armies applying it; to the co-operation of all arms; and, by no means least, to the, as yet, unblemished resolution of the Russian infantryman. On 4th June the Russian armies, from the Pripet to the Bukovina, from General Kaledin to General Lechitsky, began to move forward simultaneously after an artillery preparation which had not smashed up the Austrian trenches after the manner of the bombardments on the Western Front, but had cut lanes in the wire by which infantry might force a way into enemy positions. Generals Kaledin and Sakharoff, who held the most northerly of the commands in the southern group, pushed forward in three directions: on the right their columns moved parallel to the railway which runs from Rovno to Kovel and the River Styr; the central group of corps took the road to Vladimir Volhynsk; the left marched parallel to the Rovno-Dubno-Brody railway. The three advances were shaped on the lines of a broad arrow. (It will be observed that in this advance Sakharoff's right co-operated with Kaledin's left. On the other hand, Sakharoff's left engaged the Austrian army next lower down, namely that of Boehm-Ermolli).

The 2 armies which thus Kaledin and Sakharoff engaged were those of General Puhallo von Brlog and the Archduke Josef Ferdinand. The right-hand columns north of Kolki, where the marshes were numerous, made comparatively little headway against General Puhallo; but in the centre, against the Archduke, the Russian columns swept through the defences like paper, and, with their cavalry rounding up the prisoners, marched swiftly forward over rolling country to the Styr, behind which the harried Austro-Hungarian troops were bundled. The leading Russian columns occupied Lutsk on 7th June, forced a passage over the Styr on 8th June, and by the 16th were 12 miles from Vladimir Volhynsk. The right wing, though making much slower progress, had by the 13th captured Kolki, and as the wedge broadened, went on to take Svidniki on the Stokhod after a very fierce engagement. On the south of the great semicircular salient thus created, and known thereafter as the Lutsk salient, Sakharoff's right wing captured Dubno on the 8th, and was on the 16th at Radzilvo, outside the gates of Brody, 7 miles distant. In twelve days' time this most damaging attack had captured 70,000 prisoners, 83 guns, and a great amount of war material gathered from an area which at its greatest depth was nearly 50 miles from the 80-mile front whence it had started. Kaledin was now 25 miles from Kovel; and the situation here was one which demanded instant action. Von Linsingen, with his reserves, and such

reinforcements as Hindenburg could spare from the northern front, took over what was left of the Archduke's army, and Ludendorff came down to clear up the situation. Before scanning the success of the German commanders in stemming so threatening an advance, the successes of the Russians on other sectors of their front may be considered.

General Scherbatcheff's front of action was on a line from Kozlov, just below the railway from Tarnopol to Lemberg, to the River Dniester. He had Sakharoff's left wing to aid him. Sakharoff faced Boehm-Ermolli, and his function was to hold the ground here conformably with Scherbatcheff's attack on the German General von Bothmer. Von Bothmer's troops were stiffened with Germans, but were chiefly Galician Poles, who fought very well against the Russians. Scherbatcheff's task proved by no means easy. His preliminary bombardment and the onrush of his infantry burst through the first lines of Bothmer's defences, but the German general's left held fast to the railway to Tarnopol, and while he pivoted there his line could not be thrown back, but only swung westwards. Nevertheless, lower down he pressed back towards the Strypa, running north and south, which the Russians crossed towards the centre, and lower down still Scherbatcheff seized Bucacz (8th June) and, crossing the Strypa at several points, pushed well to the westwards. In these and subsequent operations Scherbatcheff captured 17,000 prisoners and 30 guns; but while Bothmer was strongly posted, with the Lemberg-Tarnopol line to supply him, the Russians were unable either to roll him up or advance their own left too far for fear of a dangerous counter-stroke.

In the most southerly section General Lechitsky struck very hard frontally at the strongest point of General von Pflanzer-Baltin's defences on the range of hills between the Dniester and the Pruth, while at the same time making an equally vigorous turning movement by way of the bridge-heads across the Dniester, which was the flank protection of Pflanzer-Baltin's position. Of these bridge-heads Oscieszko had been won in the Russian winter campaigning; but the other two, Zalescyzki and Biskupie, which were nearest east, and nearer Pflanzer-Baltin's hill barrier, had resisted attempts at capture. The hill barrier did not quite touch the river to the north of it; and Lechitsky directed the most furious efforts of his frontal attack at the little gap between. It succeeded; and by the evening of 4th June, his infantry was pressing through the gap, while at the same time crossing the Dniester to the north of it at Okna, near the most easterly bridge-head of Biskupie. Pflanzer-Baltin strove in vain to stop the gap, but failed, and after five days' fighting the whole of his frontal position on the hills was gone, and Lechitsky's Cossacks, crossing the Dniester at the more westerly bridge-head of Zalesczyki, were cutting across the plain between the Dniester and the Pruth to get astride the railway which ran from the Bukovina and Czernowitz to Kolomea, and so to intercept Pflanzer-Baltin's westward retreat. The cavalry occupied Sniatyn on the railway by the 13th. Czernowitz, thus isolated, was hurriedly abandoned (17th) by whatever Germans and Austrians, civilian or military, still occupied it. But that was a small loss compared with the wreck of Pflanzer-Baltin's army, which was forced to retreat across the Pruth to the Carpathians. The Pruth was crossed by the Russians on the 16th, and on the 23rd they had reached Kimpolung, in the Bukovina, far to the south of Czernowitz, and well on the way both to Kirlibaba and to Dorna Watra, where a hand could be held to the Roumanians, if and when, they entered the war. Lechitsky had captured 39,000 of Pflanzer-Baltin's army, and scattered the remainder. To these attacks of Brussiloff's southern front must be added one made by the Fourth Russian Army on the Ninth German Army on 13th June.

Brussiloff's great attack had succeeded triumphantly on both wings, though it had made less headway at the centre. He had, therefore, two lines for subsequent advance, and two directions in which he threatened to exploit his advantage. The first, and most northerly, was towards Kovel, and that, because it would place him in a position to sever the best lateral line of communications between the German armies of the north and the Austro-Hungarian armies of the

south, was the one on which the Germans would certainly most resist him. The most southerly was that in which, devoting himself to the further destruction of the Austro-Hungarian armies, he might aim successively at the railway junctions of Kolomea, Stanislau and Halicz. These would give to him a growing share of the Dniester plain as he successively attained them. In the middle part of the line he might aim at Vladimir Volhynsk on the way to Lemberg.

The Germans rightly chose the most northern of the salients for their counter-attack, which Ludendorff instructed von Linsingen to undertake. The salient which Kaledin had created about Lutsk was an irregular semicircle. Linsingen did not strike at the apex of the arc, but where this arc, on the north, approached its chord. The point then selected was on the River Stokhod, where a most vigorous German counter-attack assailed his bridge-head at Svidniki. The Russians had to fall back under the weight of the blow, but they fought very hard during the last week of June, and were not pushed back in any way decisively enough to imperil Kaledin's communications with the westerly portions of his salient. In order to hold it better General Brussiloff now brought up a new army under General Lesch, whose object was to outflank Linsingen's outflanking manœuvre in its turn by crossing the Stokhod farther to the north. Lesch began his attack on 4th July, about the same day that General Rogoza, in a more northerly sector, renewed his attack on General Woyrsch in order still more fully to occupy the German attention.[1] The stroke was remarkably successful. He captured the railway station of Mameutchi on the line that runs westwards from Czartorysk to Kovel, and his advance spreading northwards, he took all the German positions on the lower Stokhod as far as the Pripet Marshes. His captures numbered 12,000. Kaledin, with this flanking attack prospering to the north of him, returned to the attack on the Upper Stokhod, recaptured the bridge-head of Svidniki, and thus, in conjunction with Lesch, held the whole line of the Stokhod on its eastern bank from its source to where it falls into the marshes.

The delay, however, which Linsingen had inflicted by his counter-attack was sufficient to prevent any advance on the vital point of Kovel; and in that respect it was decisive. But von Linsingen could not convert his defensive check into anything more satisfactory. In the middle of July he shifted his attack from the northern convexity of the semicircle to the southern, where it was nearest to Brody; but the attempt was disastrous. General Sakharoff, in command of the Russian forces on this side of the salient, repulsed the attack, and, following up his advantage, drove von Linsingen's reinforcements of Boehm-Ermolli back over the Galician frontier towards Brody, taking 13,000 prisoners. The pressure towards Brody began to make General Bothmer's position on the right bank of the Strypa precarious; but it was impossible for the Germans to allow him to retreat without peril to their other armies, and he was given fresh troops, and his resistance stiffened accordingly.

Obediently to the Russian strategic idea of maintaining a continuous pressure everywhere, but of seeking always some new weakened point where it would prove most effective, instead of hammering at the points where reinforcements could be massed against them, Lechitsky now took up the threads of action, and his effort was directed to the domination of that plain of the Dniester, with its railways converging about Kolomea, Stanislau, and Halicz, which conditioned either a successful attack on the Carpathians, or an advance towards a junction with Roumania. Lechitsky's cavalry had reached the Sereth on 18th June, and Kimpolung towards the end of the month, but these feelers were subsidiary to the main advance, which pushed towards Kolomea (occupied 30th June), the railway to the Jablonitza Pass (carried 4th July), and Delatyn (captured 8th July). By this time, however, the Germans had removed General Pflanzer-Baltin from the command of the remnants of his army, replacing him by General Köevess, with General Höman as coadjutor.

[1] Rogoza captured (4th July) 3100 men; but this advance was not pressed after 9th July.

General Sakharoff had meanwhile continued to exert an unremitting pressure on General Boehm-Ermolli's forces, and, after several weeks of continuous fighting, forced the Austrian commander back through Brody (28th July) on to the upper Sereth, which Sakharoff reached on 4th August. Zalotse was occupied on the 6th, and by the middle of August the Eleventh Russian Army had gained the railway running from Tarnopol to Lemberg. These operations imperilled the northern flank of Bothmer's army, which had stood almost immovably on the same railway: and at the same time General Scherbatcheff, who had been held up by the flooded Dniester, began to imperil Bothmer's southern wing. On 7th August he captured Tlumacz with 7400 prisoners, among them several German battalions, and without a pause captured the bridge-head of Nizniow (7th August), and Stanislau (10th August). The occupation of this second nodal point, coupled with Sakharoff's successes towards Brody, foreshadowed the "cupping" of von Bothmer's resisting forces, a danger to which the German general was fully alive. He had, however, good railway communications behind him running westwards, and he began to retreat in good order on 11th August, when he evacuated his positions on the Upper Strypa. This was three days before Lechitsky's cavalry entered Mariampol (15th August), joining hands there with a cavalry column of Scherbatcheff's army under General Bezobrazoff. General Bezobrazoff had pressed forward endeavouring to keep in close touch with von Bothmer; and a fierce rear-guard action was fought between von Bothmer's Poles and the Russians at the crossings of the Zlota Lipa. However, whatever losses von Bothmer suffered there, he had ample time in which to prepare and occupy strong lines of defence on the steep banks of the parallel Gnila Lipa.

While von Bothmer, under the converging pressure of 3 Russian armies, retreated sullenly westwards—his right wing thrown backwards to hold Halicz, the last railway knot of south-eastern Galicia—the advance of Kaledin and Lesch had remained immobilized on the River Stokhod line. There was a fierce action at Svidniki on 27th July, where Kaledin captured 9000 prisoners with 46 guns; but it was not practicable to follow it up. The limits of the advance, in face of the hardening resistance of the Germans, had been reached, and great as had been Brussiloff's successes, he had, as in every victorious advance, suffered heavy losses in his best fighting divisions. Even a Russian general, at that period of the war, had not an illimitable number of shock troops, and a halt had to be called as soon as the early autumn rains aggravated the difficulties of supply and transport.

But during these summer months the Russians had performed an immense service to the Allied cause; and though the difficulties of advance against Austro-Hungarian armies, neither well generalled nor wholeheartedly devoted to the cause they were fighting for, were much less than those which Sir Douglas Haig, or General Joffre, encountered in the endeavour to break through the defences of the best equipped and most solidly entrenched forces of all the belligerents, yet the scale of the fighting was very much larger, and the scale of the losses sustained in conducting it also. The Russian advance in 1916, alike in its inception, its resolution, and its generalship, will bear comparison with that which, when all the belligerents were much more exhausted, was made by the British, French, and American armies under the direction of General Foch in 1918. By the middle of September, Generals Kaledin, Lesch, Sakharoff, Scherbatcheff, Bezobrazoff, and Lechitsky had captured over 370,000 Austro-Hungarian prisoners, 450 guns, and an amount of supplies as great as fell into Ludendorff's hands in his break through at St. Quentin in 1918, or after the Caporetto disaster on the Italian front in 1917. Such victory as had been won against the Central Powers in 1916 was overwhelmingly theirs when compared with other successes; and it was because they had all but put the Austro-Hungarian armies out of action, and had laid them open to a new, and, as it was hoped and believed, a decisive attack in the following spring, that the belief in a speedy ending to the war early in 1917 was born.

Something more than attrition of Russia's man-power had been suffered during the great offensive of 1916, and something more than the wearing down of the steel facing of shock battalions. There had been a great loss of officers; and neither the new officers, nor the men hastily trained in reserve camps, were the equivalent of the old. In Great Britain the old regular army had been lost in the battles of 1914 and 1915, but its spirit and traditions, as Sir Douglas Haig testified in the Victory Dispatch penned in 1918, infused the new armies, so that in tenacity and hard-won skill there was not a great deal to choose between them. But in Russia war-weariness received a thousand encouragements, and the fire of enthusiasm with which the Russian Empire, so far as it was articulate, had received the Tsar's declaration of war, sank and was quenched in the revelation of the incompetence and corruption of those who governed the country in war-time.

Russia, an agricultural country which was at the beginnings of industrialism, had not the necessary machinery for conducting a long war. Her railways were not equal to the strain of transport; her factories could not turn out the requisite material; and in the new tasks which both were called on to undertake they proved insufficient, and were overtaken by a progressive paralysis. There must have been many thousands of patriotic Russians who strove in an agony of effort to keep things going, or to put things right; but their endeavours were inconspicuous by the side of the conduct of those who were incompetent, or corrupt. The word treachery began to be whispered, and grew louder. The new armies contained many of the industrialized half-educated, or better educated, classes; and these formed a fertile ground, when the army was ill-led or ill-fed, in which to sow the seeds of discontent, mutiny, revolution. Revolution in the industrialized classes had been simmering since 1905; the aggregation of hundreds of thousands of men in camps and in armies gave ample opportunity for its doctrines to spread, as influenza spreads in crowds. It has been sometimes thought to be extraordinary that among a population, nine out of ten of whom cannot read, the theories of Anarchistic Socialism should have been distributed so thoroughly; but the phenomenon was not astonishing among some seven or eight million men massed in reserve depots. The focus of disaffection was Petrograd, and there it exhibited itself most palpably when the time came; but it had a hundred points of distribution, some of them outside Russia, in Switzerland, in New York, in Finland, in Germany, and even in London. Probably the least disaffected localities were the army fronts, but these were not immune; and though the great bulk of the public of France and Great Britain rested satisfied in the belief that Russia, stimulated by the 1916 victories, and conscious of her great reserves of man-power and the stream of ammunition and artillery flowing in from the White Sea and from Vladivostok, was gathering herself together for the greatest effort of all in the spring of 1917, yet there were some who, better informed, or more suspicious, noted with anxiety that during the winter of 1916–17 there was along the Russian front very little of that enterprising raiding activity which had been present in former years.

The dangers of the political situation were more obvious. The British Ambassador in Petrograd, Sir George Buchanan, had been obliged to protest more than once against the pro-German attitude of certain sections of the Russian aristocracy; in the Duma, M. Miliukoff had courageously risen to denounce the attitude of M. Stürmer, the Minister of the Interior; and the dispatch in turn of Lord Kitchener, on the tragic voyage of the *Hampshire*,[1] and of Lord Milner indicated that all was not well in the Russian situation. The root of the evil was popularly supposed to be the pro-German influences at Court, coupled with the autocratic resolution of the Tsar and Tsaritsa not to yield to popular pressure for a more democratic form of government. But it went deeper than that. Unreported in the debates were the utterances of Socialists like Kerensky, which showed that the spirit of revolution had not been laid either in 1905 or by the fierce spell of war, and that it was waiting such a moment

[1] H.M.S. *Hampshire*, with Lord Kitchener on board, foundered off the Orkneys on 5th June, 1916.

as had now arrived to declare itself. The story of these tendencies belongs more properly to a political narrative than to one dealing, as in this chapter, with the course of the war, but a reference to them is necessary to make comprehensible the inactivity on the Russian front during this winter and spring, and the reports, which could not be suppressed, of fraternization of Russian and German soldiers.

The more immediate concern of the present narrative is to examine the help which the Russian forces lent to Roumania after the entry of that country into the war. Roumania came in before she was ready; her stocks of ammunition and her guns were insufficient, her army was ill-officered, the military strategy adopted was wrong, and the enemy she had to meet was incomparably her superior at every point. These are sufficient reasons for the series of disasters which overtook her, and there is no need to resort for explanation to the supposed Russian failure to make the necessary junction with the Roumanian forces through the Bukovina, or to place the numbers of soldiers agreed upon at Roumanian disposal. Lechitsky's advance guards had reached Kimpolung in the summer, and in the same drive the passes of Kirlibaba and Jablonitza were approached. Subsequently the Bukovina was effectively occupied, and the necessary steps taken to effect a junction with the Roumanians, when the occasion for it arose. But the function of the Russian forces was not limited to joining hands with the Roumanians. It was desirable that they should hold the hinge in the eastern Carpathians, whence the Austro-Hungarian armies could sally to attack the Roumanian flank, and the most effective form of aid would, of course, have been to occupy the passes and threaten the Hungarian plains with a Russian advance.

The Jablonitza Pass, through which a railway runs to Marmaros Sziget in Hungary, was the avenue by which such an advance would have been most effective and threatening. Failing that there were two passes, farther south-east, the Kirlibaba (reached by Russian patrols, but quickly abandoned, in 1915) and the Borgo Pass, through which a road leads to Dorna Watra, the agreed point of junction between the two armies. These passes were all strongly held by Austro-Hungarian troops, and the Jablonitza especially was well and scientifically protected by artillery. General Köevess, in charge of the defending forces, was able to hold all three passes, and the Russians, though they expended the men, had not the guns to take them. There were many fierce encounters, of which the most successful and bloodiest were those at Kirlibaba, on 28th November; at Sumaren, a height commanding the Jablonitza gate, on 3rd December; and between Dorna Watra and the Borgo Pass, on 8th December. In each of these actions the Russians made some ground and took prisoners, but they could neither improve on the positions won nor hold them.

Failing this, to the Russians fell the scarcely less arduous task of protecting the beaten Roumanians as they fell back to the line of the Sereth under the pressure of von Falkenhayn's victorious advance through the Transylvanian passes. This line extended 45 miles in a north-westerly direction from Galatz, where the Sereth falls into the Danube, to the entrenched camp of Focsani. The River Sereth, which rises in Moldavia, flows north to south more or less parallel to the Pruth, and passes east of Focsani. On 2nd December Russian Head-quarters, fully alive to the danger in which their Roumanian allies stood, sent a force from Vuskineff to hold up Falkenhayn's endeavour to turn the Sereth line. They took up a position at Rimnic Sarat, and for five days held up the German advance. In this struggle they lost 7600 prisoners, but kept their guns—which were not likely to have been numerous—and they courageously counter-attacked after the positions had been lost and the town abandoned. They fell back steadily on Focsani, fighting rear-guard actions; but they could not hold this valuable point under the threat of a turning movement by the German Ninth Army's northern wing, which found and forced a way by the upper reaches of the River Putna, a tributary of the Sereth flowing through Focsani.

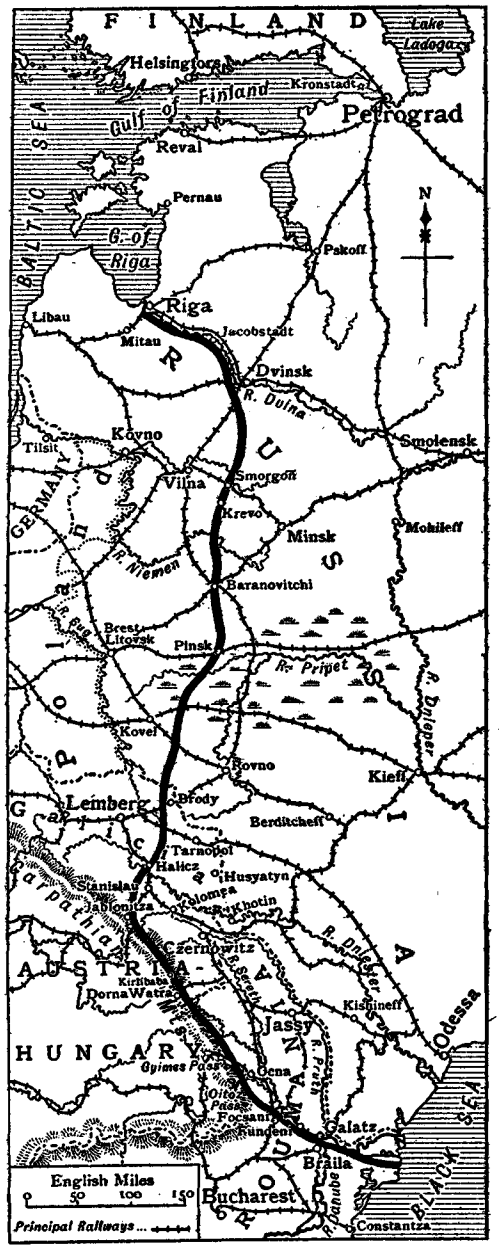
In the south, on the other side of the Danube, were other Russian forces, also belated, which were endeavouring to help

THE REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

Leninists firing on the crowd in Petrograd.—Reproduced from an instantaneous photograph

the Roumanians to hold back Mackensen's advance through the Dobrudja; though when the term "belated" is used, it must be held only to imply that the Russians, who were under Sakharoff, arrived too late to remedy a state of affairs which had never been contemplated as possible. The Roumanian ability had been over-estimated, the force of the German leadership and organization and driving power under-estimated; and the hopeless state of the railways, which could not be driven to accommodate an urgent and unexpected necessity such as here arose, were responsible for the delay and the consequent disaster. It must suffice to say at this point [1] that General Sakharoff, tardily put in charge of the Dobrudja reinforcements, did hold back von Mackensen for some time from the lower reaches of the Sereth.

Along the line of the river runs a railway coming up through Roumania, through Rimnic Sarat and Focsani. Thirty miles north of Focsani another railway strikes north-eastwards from the main line to the Gyimes Pass of the eastern Carpathians, thence running into Hungary. By the side of this railway the river Trotus descends from the pass, and has various small tributaries, the Tzul, the Slanic, the Oitoz, rising in the Oitoz Pass, and flowing into the Trotus, with another stream, the Casin, on which stands Monestirka. Twenty miles south is Pralea on the Suritza. The country thus intersected is rough and bare of roads. In the first week of January, 1917, General Gerok, who, with Generals Deliminsingen and Morgen, formed von Falkenhayn's left wing, began to press down these valleys, and General Goldbach began to descend the more southerly Slanic. The critical period was in the first fortnight of January, 1917, during which Russians and Roumanians, at their best in this kind of infantry fighting, tenaciously defended their positions. In the last fortnight, though they were pressed back to Fundeni and to the general line of the Sereth, they deprived the Austro-German advance of its momentum. In February General Gourko, sent to the Bukovina to reorganize the defences, began an intermittent but protracted counter-offensive, in which Locker-Lampson's British armoured-car squadron took part. The general results up to the end of March were that, though the Germans could not be forced back, they were unable to pierce the Sereth line.




The Russo-Roumanian Front on the Eve of the Russian Revolution

[1] Further reference will be found in the subsequent chapter dealing with the Balkan campaigns.

They could afford to wait, for a more powerful ally than any was coming to their aid. " Time ", said Mr. Lloyd George, in a much-quoted speech, " is the deadliest of the neutrals." Time was on the side of Germany on this front, for they had but to wait for the consummation of the revolution in Russia in order to be relieved of the pressure of the most numerically powerful of their enemies, Russia herself. That Germany was well acquainted with the possibility was made evident by the cessation of activity along the 800-miles front during the winter, and by the fraternization between the opposing lines, which was encouraged. A virtual armistice existed in some sectors during the period when the revolution was gathering force, and became of continually widening extent as the prospects of a Socialist Government of an anarchistic type became brighter. The Tsar abdicated in March; efforts were made to establish a Constitutional Government under the leadership of a Provisional Committee, of whom the chief figures were Prince Lvoff and M. Miliukoff, both friends of the Allies, Great Britain and France, and staunch for the vigorous prosecution of the war against Germany.

To unseeing eyes it appeared possible that Russia had revolted to rid herself of pro-German influences; and that, with these shackles gone, with her artillery renewed, her depots filled, this newly-born giant would aid Europe to overthrow the last and most powerful of the autocracies. There were many men in Russia who, seeing the eyes of the Western world thus turned in expectation towards them, strove to fulfil their destiny. They were frustrated, not by the intrigues of Germany, nor yet wholly by the handful of persistent and determined Red revolutionaries—among whom Lenin was the strongest, the shrewdest and the ablest —but by the inertia and incomprehension of that immensely preponderant population of Russia which does not understand ideals or politics, but wants food and land and peace in which to enjoy them. The part which Lenin and his associates played in the struggle was not that of German agents, though their activities enabled the military party in Germany to make one more great effort to turn the tide of war in Germany's favour, but that of false evangelists who persuaded the Russian people that they would lead them out of the miseries of war into the Land of Promise.

But an army, like a nation, takes a great deal of destroying; and though the Russian army was inoculated with the same virus of peace—honourable or dishonourable—that had spread through Petrograd and Moscow, it had not wholly forgotten the tradition of obedience. This was sapped by an ordinance that was symbolic and by a measure which was practically disruptive. The ordinance was the notorious " Prikaz No. 1 ", which enjoined soldiers not to salute their officers; the practical measure was the constitution of Soldiers' Committees analogous to the Soldiers and Workmen's Committees which were at this time the virtual governors of Russia. These Soldiers' Committees discussed orders, tactics, and strategy; and produced such a state of indiscipline on the larger part of the front that no general would, or could, have thought of leading his troops to an attack on the enemy's lines.

Shortly after the Tsar's abdication, General Alexieff had been confirmed in his office as Commander-in-Chief. In the mid-period of the revolution, after M. Kerensky, as a kind of balancing power between the extreme Socialists and the Constitutionalists, had become Prime Minister, General Alexieff resigned. Any general at this time was always afraid to risk an offensive; the risk arising now not from any shortage of guns and shells, or even transport—in this respect the army front was better equipped than at any previous time—but from a want of confidence in the soldiers. It is certain, however, that no great offensive could have depended on the railways, which were worse now than ever. Their rolling-stock had not been renewed, and all the efforts of American engineers to get the lines in order were unable to release them from the dry rot spreading through them. On the northern front, nearest Petrograd, where the railway lines, though bad, were better than elsewhere, the spirit of the troops was worst of all. On the Warsaw front it was a little better; General

Gourko, who commanded there, was removed by the Government on suspicion of being concerned in intrigues to restore the autocracy. General Gourko denied the accusation, and subsequently found his way to England; but it was an accusation which, had it been levelled at many other generals, might have been true.

There was, in short, a profound distrust between the army's best generals and the Government, and a scarcely less pronounced want of confidence between commanders and commanded in the army itself. The front least infected was that between the Pripet and the Carpathians, which had been cemented by Brussiloff's victories of the preceding year, and the Allied ambassadors in Petrograd, though they could not ignore the signs that it would be much harder for any Russian leader to take Russian soldiers into a successful battle than to lead the Russian people to a German peace, urged Kerensky and the so-called Coalition Government to order an offensive in this region. Kerensky did his best; he visited the army fronts, and, with the aid of a passionate eloquence, galvanized the troops, or a great many of them, into a vociferous, if brief, allegiance to duty.

Behind the front a struggle went on between Kerensky and the Bolsheviks under Lenin and his chief-of-staff, Trotsky; and the struggle may be compared to a race against time. If Kerensky's appeal had produced a fairly lasting responsiveness in the army, then an offensive of a limited kind might be launched, and if it were successful, as it ought to be, and would have been in the previous year, it might bind the victorious troops to a new purpose, and keep them in motion. It would also, these things having been secured, contribute to maintain Kerensky and his Government in the saddle. The Lenin party, on the other hand, hoped to prevent any such movement, and prepared a rising in Petrograd on the eve of it. The Germans, it may perhaps be assumed, did not believe that any considerable offensive could be launched. General Brussiloff was himself doubtful; but he concurred in the plans for it.

The plans were designed by General Gutor —not a great strategist, though a good soldier. But the best strategist would have been hampered by conditions which prescribed a limited offensive, and one which would not put too great a strain either on the ability or the endurance of the soldiers taking part in it. The factors in Gutor's favour were that the Austro-Hungarian forces south of the Pripet were not much better than his own in point of loyalty to their cause; and that the German Head-quarters Staff was very sceptical about the possibility of any such attack. General Gutor had, therefore, the advantage of springing a surprise, and, on the front which he proposed to assail—from Brody to the sector south of the Dniester, where Lechitsky had paused in the preceding autumn—he had a considerable numerical superiority: 54 Russian divisions to 30 mixed Austro-Hungarian, with Turks and some German troops. The Russian divisions were all well supplied: their aeroplane service was better than it had been; they had abundance of material and munitions, and the front was not ill-supplied with railways and roads. It was also good fighting weather. In other circumstances the opportunity would have seemed heaven-sent.

General Gutor directed 3 armies. The Eleventh, under General Erdelli, was to act along an 11-mile front from a point north-west of Tarnopol, and to get astride the railway which leads from Tarnopol through Zloczow to Lemberg. This line joins the more northern railway from Brody to Lemberg. The Seventh Army, under General Belkovitch, facing Brzezany, was to cross the River Zlota Lipa, where von Bothmer had made his stand, and was then to wheel north-westwards in the same direction as General Erdelli, and the Eleventh Army, with which it was to seek touch. If these movements succeeded, the advance was to be continued towards Bobrka, through which the railway from Halicz to Lemberg passed. The whole of this task was a serious one, for the country through which it had to be made was wooded, and intersected by awkward ravines and a difficult river. Scherbatcheff's forces had been unable to traverse it the year before.

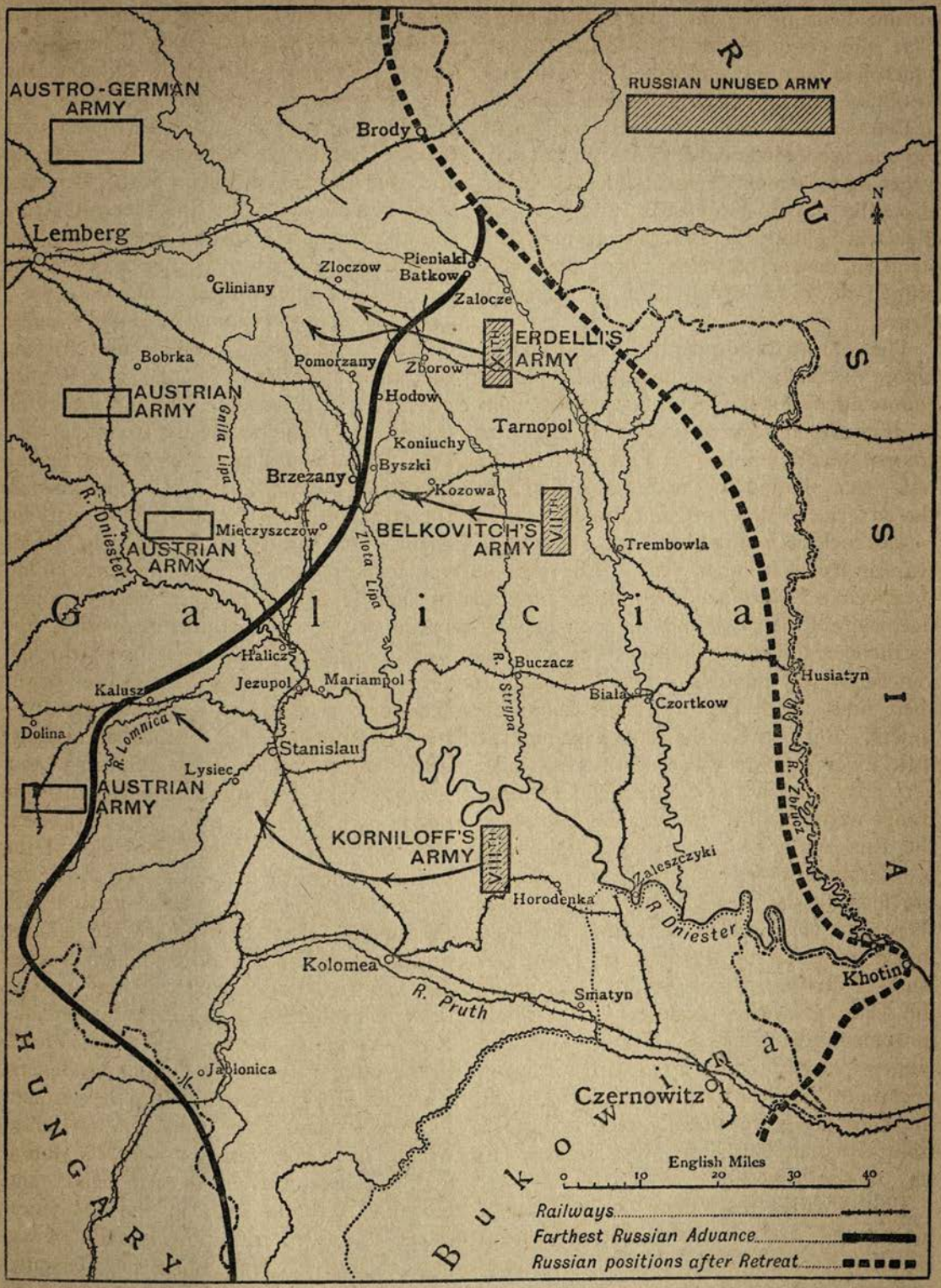
Far to the south General Korniloff, with

the Eighth Army, was entrusted with the turning flank movement. He was to complete the conquest of the Halicz region, which had been left unfinished in 1916, and to obtain control of the railway leading up to Lemberg. If his movement, a wide turning one, succeeded, and if that of Belkovitch, a turning movement of less radius, succeeded also, the Austro-Hungarian and German divisions holding the Brzezany front would stand in danger of being rolled up, while pinned down by Erdelli and the Eleventh Army.

The venture was desperate. It is said that before the action opened, corps and company commanders alike spent the previous night in desperate and prayerful anxiety lest their troops should fail them. One part of the task—that allotted to the Seventh Army in the advance to Brzezany and the Zlota Lipa—was such as might have tried the best of Russian troops in other years. The position they were asked to take was protected by the deep cleft of the river, and high wooded hills on the east and to the south. The men advanced bravely enough on 1st July, and in their first assault captured over 2000 prisoners. But between the Zlota Lipa and the little River Tseniow was a death-trap, where very great numbers of German and Austrian troops were killed by the advance, but where the Russians were themselves caught in a murderous cross-fire; and the history of many previous Russian assaults was repeated. But there now arose an incident unprecedented in the tragedies of the Eastern Front. A Russian division, which might have turned the scale, refused to advance, and the whole movement was arrested. The ground won was temporarily retained, but with a growing uncertainty. In the days that followed, while the Germans were steadily reinforcing the front, Russian battalions were refusing to stay in the front line.

This situation reacted on the position of the troops farther north, where General Erdelli's Eleventh Army had at first done extremely well at little cost. Finnish troops with a Czecho-Slovak brigade had been the Greathead shield of the advance, and had forced the Austro-Hungarians back towards the Little Strypa. The Czecho-Slovak brigade alone captured over 3000 prisoners, many of them compatriots, and not unwilling to be taken. Other fighting of a heavy kind about Koniuchy added to the tale of successes, prisoners, and guns, till by 3rd July the captures were well over 6000. But as the Seventh Army paused, and the German anxiety on the Brzezany front became less acute, the Eleventh Army found a period put to its successes also, and by 6th July the advance here ceased in the face of energetic counter-attack.

In the south, General Korniloff's career offered a temporary promise of retrieving the shaking fortunes of the last Russian offensive. His advance did not begin till 6th July, by which time the fronts opposite the Eleventh and Seventh Armies should, according to plan, have been engaging all the attention that the enemy could spare for them. On the first day he began to feel his way forward from Stanislau, on a broad front, to Dolina, and on 8th July, when he joined battle with von Bothmer's division, the Eighth Army's shock troops went through the enemy resistance as if it had been paper. Jezupol was taken and Korniloff's cavalry—his best arm—pushing forward with daring, circled round to the River Lukwa and to a point 8 miles behind the enemy's first-line defences. He took over 7000 prisoners. Von Bothmer, realizing the gravity of the position, nevertheless held the front together, and presently counter-attacked with the Austrian Third Army; but Korniloff bore down his resistance, and his infantry reached the Lukwa. In two days fighting he had broken through on a 13-mile front, and the Russian infantry, pouring through the breach in the wake of the shock division of General Cheremisoff's corps, spread into the southern Dniester plains. In three days Halicz, which had been unapproachable during many months, was in Russian hands, and Korniloff's thrust had, in the theoretical sense, succeeded triumphantly. But it was only in theory. He had, as he afterwards confessed, used up the best of his shock troops; and even if it had been possible to send others—which it was not—they could not have altered a situation which was crumbling from within.




Russia's Last Effort in 1917: map showing approximately the farthest line reached by the attacking armies, and the Russian positions after the retreat

Korniloff had taken 12,000 prisoners; he had broken the resistance in front of him; he had reached Kalusz; but he could not even keep his troops sober. With sobriety went discipline, and he was afraid to hazard an advance beyond the Lomnica. Thus, in the region where the greatest successes had been won, victory was no longer an incitement. Even Korniloff's soldiers began to leave their positions. He was a general who would have made no bones about enforcing the death penalty for disobedience or cowardice, whatever might have been the orders of civilian chiefs, but he was helpless in face of the spreading break-down. He might have kept his own front; a charge ordered by Prince Gagarin and a Caucasian brigade against a defaulting regiment is symbolic of the measures he was prepared to take; but he could not dragoon armies of which he was not in charge.

The first of such armies to afford evidence that the rot was deadly was the Eleventh. On 20th July, following a strong German counter-attack between Pieniaki and Batkow, which was nearly the most northerly point attained in the advance, " the 607th Mlynoff Regiment left the trenches voluntarily ", as the Russian *communiqué* plainly put it. In still plainer words they ran away, leaving the other regiments, who were standing up to the enemy, to bear the brunt alone. These regiments were forced back; the breach was widened: the enemy pressed through it. The gate had been opened by the Russians but the effect was no other than that of a break-through by the enemy. The German-Austrian attack, spreading to Zborow, at the unction of the two main roads to Zalocze and Tarnopol, found a Russian division ready to throw down its arms and desert; and in a day the breach had so extended that the German-Austrian wedge could be thrust through it to separate the Eleventh and Seventh Russian Armies. The disaster was complete and irreparable. The command of the army group was hastily transferred from General Gutor to General Korniloff, but neither Korniloff's discipline, nor the genius of Brussiloff, who made the exchange, could alter the essentials of the situation, which were, simply, that the Russian armies would not fight, and were now speeding away from the front in a contagion of panic.

All attempts to stop the flight were useless. The British armoured-car squadron, which had been operating in this region, was occupied, like others, not in contributing to an advance, but in endeavouring to stem a retreat. On the night of 20th July the breach was 20 miles wide, and on 21st July the German guns were shelling Brussiloff's recent head-quarters at Tarnopol, while civilians and broken Russian divisions fought with one another for the means to get away. Some regiments stood firm, and there are many tales of swift and unexpected vengeance on traitors and cowards, such as, for example, that of one of the Socialist Government Commissaries, Kalinin, who ordered the artillery to fire on fugitives who had assimilated only too well the theories of pacifist Socialism. The Russian official *communiqué* of 22nd–23rd July observed that the Russian troops, having manifested disobedience to the commanders, were continuing to retreat to the Sereth and to surrender to the enemy.

Tarnopol, the scene of orgies which would have disgraced Turks or Bulgarians, the scene also of some feats of despairing heroism, was occupied by the Austrians on 22nd July; its stores had been burnt, as were those at Koziowa. The Austrian divisions did not advance fast, and it is fairly clear that had there been anyone to rally, or any divisions to be rallied, a determined counter-attack could have been averted the completion of the disaster. Two Austro-Hungarian divisions herded 12 Russian divisions in front of them. But what is clearer than speculations as to what might have been done, is that no measures could have been permanently useful; because the disintegration of the Eleventh and Seventh Armies in Galicia was but a token that the Russian armies as a whole would fight no more.

On 25th July it was announced that on the Dvinsk front, on which depended the defence of Riga, whole Russian armies had left the trenches without waiting for the enemy to attack them. The Bolshevik promises of peace, land, and bread, well

supported by ingenious German propaganda, were possibly the determining cause in precipitating the wholesale defections; but the simplest explanation is that the Russian armies, which had fought so well for the Tsar, did not now know what they were fighting for, and had no longer any desire to fight German soldiers, whom they may have regarded, not without reason, as inspired by the same longing for peace as themselves. In the south, General Korniloff, whose own Eighth Army had fewer workmen and more Siberian and Little Russian soldiers than the others—in other words was a less sophisticated organization—was able to restore some sort of coherence to his front. Stanislau was abandoned on 25th July; Kolomea 27th July; and Czernowitz changed hands for the last time on 31st July, or thereabouts. Galicia was thus surrendered, and the Bukovina followed.

Yet Korniloff at one time, having safely brought his armies to a standstill on the River Zborocz, seemed to have a chance of once more making a Russian army. He succeeded in wringing from Kerensky's Government permission to enforce discipline by the restoration of the death penalty, and it almost seemed as if a military political regime under Kerensky and Korniloff might be stabilized. It was not, and for two reasons, which belong rather to the political than the military history of the time, but which may be briefly stated. The first was that Lenin, and those who acted with him, saw quite plainly that there could be no security for a Revolutionary Government while the Russian army, with all its traditions of subservience to aristocratic authority, existed; the second was that the larger portion of the Russian peasantry wished to shake off the shackles of the army, and all it represented, for ever.

There were several more refusals to fight—on the Roumanian front for example—which were evidence of these tendencies, and the Russian armies, as factors in the international conflict, may be said to have ceased to exist almost as completely after the flight from Zborow as after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Brest-Litovsk, and the events which occurred immediately before and after, gave to the German Army Command more complete freedom of action, and handed over to the Germans great stores of the guns, ammunition, and stores which Russia's allies had sent to her. But during the larger part of 1917 the Russian front was used as a place to which to send "resting" German divisions from the Western Front. Later it was used as a training-ground: and some of the German divisions which were to break through the British lines between St. Quentin and Cambrai in March, 1918, were trained on the Riga front.

Thus the Russian defection changed the face of the war in more than one aspect. It enabled the Germans to take risks in the West in 1917, as well as to supply a sufficient stream of reinforcements to meet the most powerful thrusts of the French or British armies. It made the dispatch of their divisions to aid the Austro-Hungarian forces, in the attack on General Cadorna's lines in Italy, a perfectly safe proceeding. It enabled them, despite the intervention of America, and the disappointment of their hopes in respect of the effectiveness of the U-boat campaign, to assemble a greater, and more preponderant, striking force than any they had yet commanded on the Western Front. Finally, it enabled them to train their force throughout the winter of 1917–8, and to equip it with completeness. In short, Russia's withdrawal from the conflict gave to Germany the best opportunity that she had enjoyed since September, 1914, of winning the war.

# CHAPTER XIV

## GERMANY'S OFFENSIVE ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1918—FIRST PHASE

Throughout the winter of 1917–18 the Allies, French and British, could do no other than concert measures to meet the attack which it was certain would be delivered against them by the reinforced German armies in the West. The circumstances which contributed to the certainty were that once again the military party in Germany had gained the ascendancy: and that in their opinion the result of such an offensive could be mathematically predicted. The mathematical probability that the war would be brought to an end by the action of German submarines had broken down, very largely because of the ready assistance lent by America of her destroyers, the destroyer being the most effective enemy of the submarine. But the Germans still did not believe that the United States armies could ever arrive in time to tip the scale of numerical forces against the Germans. "They have not wings and cannot fly," said an admiral in the Prussian Diet. "They cannot swim: they will not come." So fixed were the German authorities in this belief that, according to Admiral Sims, of the United States navy, they deliberately refrained from torpedoing American transports in the earlier months of 1917, in order not to exacerbate American feeling. Later, when the joint anti-submarine campaign began to get the U-boat menace within bounds, it became impracticable to remedy this mistaken political calculation.

Even so, the Germans had good grounds, material and moral, for confidence. They had nothing to fear from Russia, and as early as November, 1917, had begun to withdraw divisions from the Russian Front; they had in October, 1917, once again pulled their incompetent partner, Austria-Hungary, out of the mire, and had immobilized the Italian armies by the remarkable and unexpected victory at Caporetto—the swiftest return for a limited expenditure of energy that the war had then witnessed. They were free to mass all their strength on the Western Front; they were able to give their men a training in new tactics with German thoroughness; and they had grounds for confidence alike in their leadership, their organization, and their military skill in major and minor tactics. The victories over Russia and Italy did not grow smaller in contemplation, and it is safe to assert that the German army chiefs were troubled with few doubts. There were doubters in the German political world, as was revealed by the publication of the Lichnowsky pamphlet—in which the late German ambassador in London absolved the British Foreign Minister from responsibility for the war—and as was also shown by the declaration of von Kuhlmann, Prince Lichnowsky's former coadjutor, that no decision of the war by military action alone was likely. But Lichnowsky was disgraced; von Kuhlmann retired from his office of Foreign Minister; and Ludendorff and Hindenburg were allowed to go on with their colossal preparations.

The Allies prepared in a different way. Their front from a military point of view was quiescent except for raids undertaken to procure information; above it, in the air, and behind it there was ceaseless activity. The air raids were, like those which were conducted across No Man's Land, designed to disturb the German concentrations and preparations, and were largely confined to these objects, though in response to an indignant outcry of French and English civilians a number of bombing raids were carried out on German towns, especially on those where their appearance disturbed the manufacture of munitions, and compelled the German authorities to follow the British example of diverting a number of guns and aeroplanes to repel the raiders.

A great effort had been made at the Versailles conference of November, 1917, to remove finally the anomalies which, in the presence of a strong and determined enemy,

animated and directed by a single command, left the Franco-British Front in the West to be governed by two commanders-in-chief. The arguments in favour of their retention were that the British army, though it occupied a less extended section of the line than the French, was the guardian of that portion of the front on which the German blow would fall; and had also been, since April, 1917, the chief bearer of the burden of warfare. There were angry protests in Great Britain at the suggestion that the British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, or Sir William Robertson, his colleague in England, should be made subordinate to anybody. Yet it should have been evident that since Sir Douglas Haig could hardly take on himself the responsibility of moving French armies, it was better that a French general should move British armies than that there should be no single direction at all. The struggle to establish this logical front was long and severe, though it has been put on record by General Foch that Sir Douglas Haig loyally supported the idea. It was not finally admitted till the German attack on the British Fifth Army had driven its necessity home. In the meantime there were substitutes for this " direct action ". Sir Douglas Haig, rather against his own judgment, took over a new stretch of French line, extending the front of the Fifth Army to cover the village of Barisis, seven miles south of the Oise. Twenty-eight miles of this extension had been previously covered by the French Third Army. It was carried into effect late in January, and by that time the British armies covered 125 miles of front, of which the Fifth Army was unduly stretched between Gouzeaucourt to Barasis to guard 42 miles.

As there could be no question of an Allied offensive till such time as the American numbers should be available (and a sufficient number of American divisions trained), it became necessary to put this 125 miles into a sound state of defence: and, furthermore, to instruct divisions (which, since 1916, had been chiefly engaged in attacking) in new tactics of defence. More than that, since it was certain that nothing would be left wanting by such military scientists as the Germans to give penetrating power to the attack, it was necessary to construct second- and third-line defences to meet their efforts. They had set the Allies a pattern in their Siegfried and other defences, and especially at such vital points as Cambrai, the Canal du Nord, and Moronvilliers, of what sound defensive lines should be like, and it behoved the British Commander not to neglect the warning or the example. Depth of defence was imperatively necessary. The assault to be met was very heavy in point of numbers, and rose to between 190 and 200 infantry divisions, with reinforcements probably called up from the east and south as the movement developed. The total of effectives may have been some 1,500,000 rifles, with another 1,000,000 in the artillery, cavalry, and auxiliary services on communications. The number of machine-guns had been increased, so that the first line of attack was almost a machine-gun line. The artillery had been greatly strengthened, the use of gas-shells developed, and a system of intensive training had accustomed part of the light artillery to go forward with the infantry.

The major tactics of the German attack contemplated, not the limited offensive, which had been the type of operations conducted by the Allies, but a continuous attack, in which a division, regarded in a sense as self-supporting, should continue its attack progressively: the general idea being that after the preliminary dash forward under artillery protection, battalion commanders should thenceforward have complete liberty of action. When any weak spot was found, neighbouring battalions were to converge on it. This system was to be carried out by the larger, as by the smaller units, the principles being the progressive advance, the avoidance of expensive pressure where resistance was great, and the search for points on which such resistance could be taken in flank. The progress of the German offensive, after its break-through of the front lines of the British Fifth Army, offered various examples of the successful carrying out of these precepts.

The British Commander-in-Chief was faced with an initial difficulty. He had never

had as many men as he wanted; those that came over in fresh drafts required training, which should have been at least as elaborate as that given by the Germans to their men, and at the same time there were the new defensive works to be built during the winter. Besides that, British divisions had been reduced from 13 to 10 battalions apiece, which was not merely a reduction in numbers but involved some loss of smoothly-working efficiency while the new organization was being handled. The German numbers were being increased, the British numbers were being diminished; the German units were being trained with great care, the British units were not being sufficiently trained, and their organization was in a state of preparation. It may be added that, at the time of the German attack, the line which the Fifth Army had to defend was too long for its strength, and that an undue number of reserves were being maintained in Great Britain.

It seemed probable, alike to the British and French Head-quarters Staff, that the German effort would be made at the point of junction, or thereabouts, of the British and French forces; though there were possibilities that attacks might be made on the French on the Rheims sector, or with a view to opening up the old paths about Verdun. Both Sir Douglas Haig and Sir Henry Wilson, who had succeeded Sir William Robertson at the War Office, were convinced that the attack would be made on the British lines south of Arras. All strategical considerations pointed to this probability; though there were obvious reasons which would impel the Germans to attack on the Ypres sector along the Menin road with a view to reaching the Channel ports. But an attack on the Fifth Army front, from Cambrai to St. Quentin, would have for its object the separation of the British and French armies, and the securing of the indispensable centre of communications at Amiens. In order to meet the highly probable eventuality that this attempt would be made, more than half the available British infantry was allocated to the defence of this sector; the whole of the cavalry was placed there, and arrangements were made for the rapid transport by rail or motor of reserve divisions to meet emergencies at threatened points. All these preparations were worked out in concert with the French Head-quarters Staff, and General Pétain's commitments included that of sending a French army corps across the Oise to aid the British Fifth Army in case of need. In the events which followed, this force was dispatched, but the British Fifth Army, attacked in overwhelming force by the Germans, had not been able to maintain its position so long as anticipated.

Sir Douglas Haig learnt from his Intelligence Department on the 19th of March, 1918, that the attack was imminent, and should be launched within 72 hours. It was, in fact, begun with a bombardment of great intensity, launched from light and heavy guns, at five o'clock in the morning of 21st March. The infantry attack followed, at times which varied slightly in different sectors, about five hours later; and it extended along a battle-front of 54 miles, between the Sensée River and the Oise. This was held by the British Third and Fifth Armies. The Third Army (General Sir J. H. Byng) held 27 miles of front from Gavrelle to Gouzeaucourt, with the 5th (General Fanshawe), 4th (General Harper), 6th (General Haldane), and 17th Corps (General Fergusson). Each division of the army held a front of about 4700 yards. The Fifth Army defended 42 miles of front from Gouzeaucourt to Barisis, with the 3rd (General Butler), 18th (General Maxse), 19th (General Watts), and 7th Corps (General Congreve). On the south of the Oise this front was held more lightly than elsewhere, because it was believed that the marshy ground would prevent any considerable German attack. The average length of front assigned to a division was 6750 yards. Thus, to meet the German attack, the Third Army had 8 divisions in line, with 7 in reserve. The Fifth Army had 11 divisions in line, and 3 infantry divisions and 3 cavalry divisions in reserve.

Against these were pitted 4 German armies: the Seventeenth (General Otto von Below), the Second (General von der Marwitz), the Eighteenth (General von Hutier), and the Seventh (General von Boehm). All

these armies had undergone intensive training, but the hammer-head of the attack was the army of von Hutier, with 23 divisions, which attacked on the lower half of the British line. The German attack was divisible into two parts, the northern attack being directed against the Third Army, from the Sensée River to the Cambrai road; the southern attack from the Flesquières salient (opposite Cambrai) to St. Quentin. Against this southern half 40 German divisions were employed (along a front of 48,000 yards), and of these 23 under von Hutier were directed against the 16,500 yards of the British Fifth Army's front nearest St. Quentin.

It was under this overwhelming pressure of a German division and a half to every thousand yards that General Gough's front gave way. When the Germans attacked on the morning of 21st March a mist shrouded all movements, but with such numbers available it was impossible to lose their way. This massing of 23 divisions for the crucial blow was the unforeseen circumstance which disconcerted the Allied plans, for it had been believed that General Gough, though he would be unable permanently to resist the forces probably brought against him, would be able to hold out for a longer period. The German organization for massing its men for so weighty and, in a great degree, so unexpected a blow, was worthy of the highest praise. Great secrecy was observed: the troops marched by night for a week beforehand, their destination unknown to themselves, but their itinerary scrupulously calculated so as to bring them into position in time. The German engineers had taken the most minute care to prepare roads, bivouacs, and dug-outs, and every degree of camouflage was employed to keep the last stages of concentration, and its extent, concealed. General von Hutier's attacking divisions were disposed, with the 3rd Corps (General von Luttwitz) of six divisions, the 9th Corps (General von Oettinger), and 17th Corps (General von Weber), on either side of St. Quentin, and the 4th Corps (General von Conta). These had 23 divisions between them, and afterwards 6 more were added. South of this army was that of von Boehm, with the Seventh Army, of 2 army corps and 6 divisions.

North of von Hutier's main attack were the armies of von der Marwitz (Second) of 21 divisions in four army corps; and of General von Below (Seventeenth), with 22 divisions. The total force employed in the attack from first to last amounted to 78 divisions—considerably greater in numbers than the whole of the British armies. The peril in which these stood was clearly understood by the French, and every provision had been made to succour them. That the succour came too late to avert the first consequences of the disaster was to be attributed, less to any miscomprehensions of the danger, than to the excellence of the German arrangements. The blow struck by von Ludendorff was an example of German military skill at its best; and if ultimately it failed the fault was not to be laid to von Ludendorff's skill, but to his under-estimate of the powers of resistance of his adversaries, and the genius of the Generalissimo subsequently pitted against him. Another factor on which he did not reckon, but which operated against him, was that, in his own army, the spirit of his shock divisions was not what it had been; and the German fighting machine, though in appearance as smooth-working as ever, lacked the hard efficiency of which will-power, no less than man-power, is the foundation. Germany's adversaries fought with desperate conviction. Von Ludendorff's armies began to crumble when victory seemed to be slipping away from them.

The bombardment by the Germans was very thorough, both in extent and in depth. Many other sectors, including those at Rheims, at the Scarpe, and at the Lys, were included in it: but the greatest intensity was reserved for the area of attack, where gas shells were used in reckless profusion, and were especially directed at the ground occupied by British batteries. The thick white fog, which was ineffective in disconcerting the German advance, made it impossible for the British batteries to render effective aid to the first-line defenders, the signals of whose outposts were not visible. Till one o'clock it was impossible to see 50 yards ahead, and the British machine-guns,

and the forward guns covering this zone, were useless. Nevertheless, the attack had been expected: the battle stations had been manned; and the tenacious and desperate defence of many of the garrisons of the forward redoubts, though it could not repel the attack, was efficacious in retarding its advance.

On the front of 54 miles attacked on this morning of 21st March, 1918, the Germans, opposed in the first place by no more than 22 British divisions in line, attained the success which their preponderance in numbers rightly should have assured them. By midday they had reached the front line of the British battle positions on practically the whole extent of their attack, except where the salient bent round Flesquières, and where, in the expectation of cupping it, they did not press frontally forward with the same determination. At several points the British battle positions had been entered: at others fierce fighting was going on in front of them. The Third Army front, which, in the prolonged and furious battle that was to follow, proved itself more resistant than the Fifth Army front, both because it was initially stronger, and because it was not struck with such persistence, recoiled under the first shock. It fought fiercely from the Canal du Nord to the Sensée River; astride the Canal the 17th Division (General Robertson), barred the German progress: but farther west Doignies and Louverval went. Similarly, though in Lagnicourt the 6th Division (General Marden) still kept the Germans out of the first-line battle positions, Noreuil, Longatte, and Écoust-St.-Menin had all fallen. That is to say, strongly fortified places in the British battle zone had been lost to the enemy, who, by their possession, would be enabled to outflank or cut off others which held out.

The fighting in and about the battle zone continued here, as elsewhere, with great intensity while light lasted, and afterwards Lagnicourt fell, and the Germans pushed the attack between Noreuil and Croisilles so heavily that at one time some of the more determined German infantry burst through the last defences of the first-line battle zone. This isolated break-through was dealt with, but the Germans reached the outskirts of St. Leger by the end of the day, and were giving the 34th Division (General Nicholson) a very severe task to hold Croisilles. The 51st Division (General Carter Campbell), held its own resolutely against some very fierce attacks around Demicourt, Doignies, and Beaumetz-les-Cambrai; and the 19th Division (General Jeffreys) in the same area essayed a counter-attack in which a company of Tanks were of great service. It partly cleared the ground, but could not get the Germans out of Doignies. A survey of the operations on the Third Army front at the end of the day would have justifiably recorded that its divisions had been very hard put to it to keep their footing; that at several points they had lost ground which they would be unable to recover, and probably would have to sacrifice more; but that on the whole the damage done was no more than was to have been expected from the weight of the long-impending blow; and that the first-zone battle positions, in which the fighting had taken place, had served their purpose.

Except that there was always a potentially greater risk that the line of the Fifth Army, less strongly held, might snap under the continuance of pressure as highly maintained, or more severely applied, the same general summary would have applied to the line from the Flesquières salient to the Oise, and in the sector south of the river. But there were two danger-points, one of which was to become critical, and almost decisive. This was at Ronssoy, below the Flesquières salient, and on the left of the Fifth Army. The Germans drove the British defenders from Ronssoy at noon; and Ronssoy was inside the second zone of the defensive positions. At the same time the villages of Hargicourt and Villeret, past which the Germans had flowed—in accordance with their pre-arranged method of converging on weak points so as to take resisting strong ones in flank and rear—were captured. This enabled the German attack to come forward in a new and stronger wave, which submerged Templeux-le-Gerard, still farther back in the British second zone; so that a breach 3 miles wide was here made through which the Germans could pass next day to attack the last barrier

of the third line. On the 21st they were held up there: and two fortified villages, Epéhy, on the north, and Le Verguier on the south of the gap, both resisted with the utmost tenacity the efforts of the Germans to capture them, and so widen the gap still further. At Epéhy the 2nd Division was the garrison which kept the pass: at Le Verguier the 24th Division. The Tanks were of the greatest assistance in arresting the progress of the flood.

The second danger-point was south of the Oise, where the British commander might, in ordinary seasons, have relied on the marshes to make any considerable attack unlikely. But long dry weather had made the marshes easily passable, and the Germans attacked over them in much superior force. They crossed the Oise-Sambre Canal and the Oise River, and penetrated the battle-zone between Essigny and Benay. They pierced the line also at Maissémy, but were held there by the 61st Division (General Mackenzie), the 24th Division (General Daly), and the 1st Cavalry Division (General Mullens). It was the Essigny, Benay, Ly-Fontaine sector on the right of the line, below St. Quentin, where the 4th German Army Corps of General Conta, and 2 divisions from the force of General von Gayl, were emerging that the dent was deepest. Quessy, on the St. Crozat Canal, was captured by the Germans operating here. The British 18th Division (General Lee), aided by the 2nd Cavalry Division, held on to its battle positions, though threatened by the advances on either side of it at Quessy and Benay. At Roupy and Savy the 30th Division (General W. de L. Williams), stood firmly to its ground, and in all this area there were heroic and prolonged resistances at many forward redoubts and strong positions. But in general the German attack was infiltrating the battle zone, and the ground south of the St. Crozat Canal was so undermined by their attack that by night-fall the impossibility of holding on to it was demonstrable. The enforced retirements had removed brigade and divisional head-quarters, so that there could be none of the usual ready intercommunication between them.

At this sector of the line the German progress had been greatest, the British retirement most marked. It was, on the other hand, a retirement which could be patched up, and it was nearest to French reinforcements. It was not the critical point. That was farther north. The dent south of the St. Crozat Canal was straightened out by the withdrawal of the divisions of the 3rd Corps, which had been fighting all day behind the canal. The withdrawal made necessary a corresponding alignment of the right-hand division, the 36th, belonging to the next more northerly corps, the 18th. This was pulled back to the line of the Somme Canal.

All this was safely carried out during the night, not, it may be assumed, without loss, certainly not without deeds of sacrifice and daring, such as those involved in blowing up the bridges—neither too soon nor too late—over the St. Crozat and Somme Canals. However unpleasant the retirement may have been, its accomplishment was a prudent act of insurance, and for the moment it seemed as if it might be a sufficient one. Other withdrawals, of which the chief was at the Flesquières salient, were also carried out; and though the British Commander-in-Chief was now aware that the whole of the German long-promised blow was to fall on his armies, he prepared to receive it calmly, and put into execution, together with General Pétain, the plan for meeting it. Part of the French Sixth Army was moved up to help the troops on the right of the British Fifth Army at once; and the French First Army was set in motion to come up behind the Fifth Army for future eventualities.

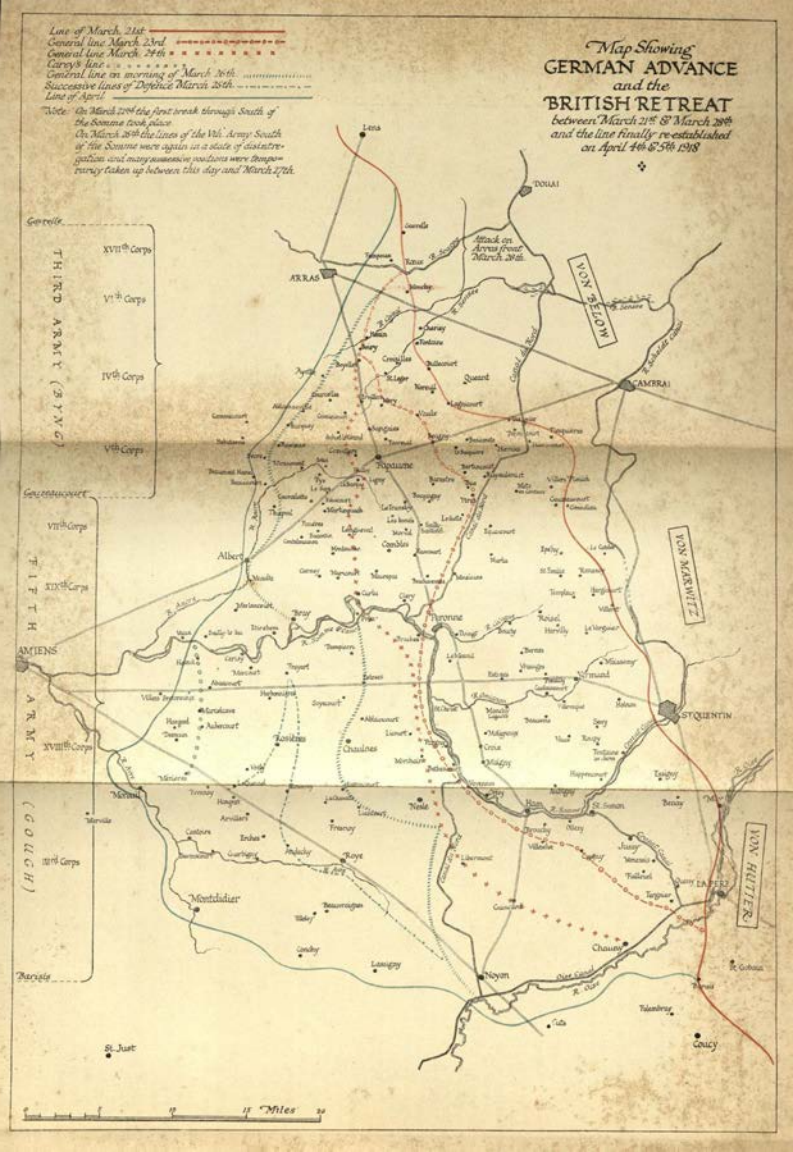
The weight of the attack on the British Fifth Army was such as to make it want all the help it could get. The Germans were employing 19 divisions in this main attack, with 10 more, situated at various distances behind, ready to march up as the days of the battle wore on. These all were under General von Hutier, whose reputation in this form of operation had been established at Riga. On the opening days this did not comprise the whole German force of assault, for south of the St. Crozat Canal were other divisions from General von Boehm's Seventh

Army; and it was two of these which took Quessy. But the main effort at fracture was to be made by General von Hutier at points where the 3-mile breach of the first day might be widened.

There was yet another misty morning on the 22nd, and through the mist came the German assault, fed without stint by reinforcements pressed forward in the teeth of artillery at short range and of the utmost fire which Lewis guns and machine-guns could pour. German machine-guns had held up many Allied attacks, both major and minor. How was it that the British fire was not able to do likewise? The answer is that along the greater part of the front it did stop the Germans by the heaviness of the losses it inflicted. But in the weakened sector which von Hutier attacked the Germans were willing to pay the price. They had by great skill brought up an overwhelming weight of men, their attack was made properly and skilfully in great depth, and though they were heedless of the cost they employed their men very adroitly. Von Hutier was able to carry out on 22nd March one of the principles inculcated beforehand, namely, that of converging on points which were weakening. His divisions took St. Emilie, one door-post of the gap, early in the morning, and also got a footing in Hervilly to the south of it, though a timely attack of the 1st Cavalry Division (General Mullens), which had been brought up, threw them out of it, while the 66th Division (Major-General Malcolm) stopped them in front of Roisel. But von Hutier's forces were now able to push forward on either side of it, to take Le Verguier, and to threaten both Roisel and Epéhy, which had been left in the air when St. Emilie was taken.

These places could only be held long enough to enable the general line of defence to be withdrawn from them; while those who stood in them to the last, and the battalions retreating from them, held back the advancing Germans as best they could. The troops fell back here to the third line of defence between Bernes and Bouchy, where their supports, the 50th Division (General Stockley), were waiting. (To the north, the 9th and 21st Divisions retired to the line of defence between Nurlu and Equancourt, which straddled one of the main roads leading back to Péronne). But the Bernes-Bouchy retirement, with the Germans pressing hard on it, left no time for precise re-alignment with the division yet farther south, and by that much left the Fifth Army's centre with a sagging flank. The German forces which had seized Maissemy spread out thence, and concentrated on the weakness. There were British troops holding Holnon Wood, south of Le Verguier; but they were smothered, and streamed back out of their battle positions in disorder, passing through the ranks of their supports—the 20th Division. Consequently, the 50th Division found itself unable to keep the positions which it had taken up, and fell back fighting fiercely and continuously from the Bernes-Bouchy defences till it could form, together with the disturbed 20th Division, a new line from Bouchy through Villencourt to Happencourt, on the Upper Crozat Canal. This was the retirement which led to that " piercing " of the Fifth Army's positions between St. Quentin and Le Verguier which was recognized in Sir Douglas Haig's bulletin of that day's occurrences, and was the first turning-point of the battle. Till that juncture, the Fifth Army, despite its loss of men and positions south of the St. Crozat Canal, had been doing all that could have been expected of it; and the same remark applies with greater force to the Third Army. But henceforward the German gain of prisoners, and ground, guns and stores, went on progressively for some time, and all the reinforcements that Sir Douglas Haig, or General Pétain sent up could be applied only to stopping gaps till the German momentum should exhaust itself.

In ordinary circumstances a brigade or divisional head-quarters is in a fixed place and can be reached by its colleagues and other divisions; in a retreat the intercommunication becomes less and less possible, with increasing confusion as a consequence. The retirement, marred as it was by confusion and doubt, was relieved by many incidents of great bravery, in which, as in the example


Map Showing
GERMAN ADVANCE
and the
BRITISH RETREAT
between March 21st & March 28th
and the line finally re-established
on April 4th & 5th 1918
Line of March 21st
General line March 23rd
General line March 24th
Carey's line
General line on morning of March 26th
Successive lines of Defence March 28th
Line of April
Note: On March 22nd the first break through South of the Somme took place
On March 26th the lines of the Vth. Army South of the Somme were again in a state of disintegration and many successive positions were temporarily taken up between this day and March 27th.
Attack on Arras front March 28th
THIRD ARMY (BYNG)
XVIIth Corps
VIth Corps
IVth Corps
Vth Corps
FIFTH ARMY (GOUGH)
VIIth Corps
XIXth Corps
XVIIIth Corps
IIIrd Corps
VON BELOW
VON MARWITZ
VON HUTIER
Lens
DOUAI
ARRAS
CAMBRAI
Topaume
Albert
AMIENS
Peronne
Rosières
Chaulnes
Nesle
Roye
Montdidier
Noyon
Chauny
Coucy
LAPERE
St. Quentin
Vermand
Ham
St. Simon
Moy
Guiscard
Tarquin
Tolembray
St. Just
Miles

of the 1st Battalion of the Inniskilling Fusiliers, men fought unrelieved to the end; and it is permissible to say that, even in the worst moments, the army never lost its belief in itself. But it was very hard pressed henceforward, and there were many critical moments. On this day the Germans were here up to the third line of defence at half-past five, and were still full of attack. The 50th British Division, stretched out from Bouchy to Villeveque, was too thinly spread to hold the attack up, though it checked it, and was forced back at Poeuilly. This opened a gap by way of the Tortille River between the 50th Division and the 61st (General Mackenzie), and this was the rift in the third and last zone of defences through which, during the evening and night, fresh German troops poured as they came up. All the British reserves that could have been got up had by this time been thrown in; so that, the reverse having occurred, there was nothing for the British commander to do but to admit it, and get his army back as best he could to the Somme.

Although things had gone so much worse than had been expected here, the defence elsewhere had not done badly. On the Third Army front the line had been shortened opposite Cambrai, and heavy German attacks at Havrincourt and Villers Plouich had been heavily beaten off. So also had others at Hermies and Beaumetz, though here the 51st Division had endured two days of uninterrupted battering. Farther north the fighting had been as hot as the Germans could make it; for apart from the necessity of pinning Sir Douglas Haig's reserves down, a break at this northern pivot would have spelt irremediable disaster to the British line.

At Vaulx Wood an attack did get right through the battle positions, but the advantage was wrested from the Germans by a swift counter-attack of infantry and Tanks. All the German progress here was too slow, and too expensive. At the other extremity of the line, (though not towards La Fère) the German progress was much more marked, though, as previously noted, it was not so lethal to the British defence as that made at the Fifth Army's centre. The divisions of von Weber and von Conta had to secure the Crozat Canal: and they succeeded, after a day's fighting for the bridge-heads at Quessy, and La Tergnier. But they suffered severe losses at La Tergnier, the principal crossing, as well as at La Montagne and Jussy; and since it had never been practicable for the British wing to hold them back here altogether, their forward movement was no quicker or more advantageous than had been anticipated.

The second day had been the German triumph. The night of the second day was spent by the commander of the Fifth Army in salving his position. General Gough ordered the 18th Corps (General Maxse), to fall back by a night march of 12 miles behind the Somme to a position south of Voyennes, keeping touch with the 3rd Corps (General Butler), on its right. North of these the 19th Corps (General Watts), and 7th Corps (General Congreve), were to fall back from 6 to 8 miles in the night, so as to hold the bridge-head defences round Péronne, through Croix-Molinaux, Monchy-Lagache, and Vraignes. Thence along the third battle-zone line a junction would be made about Equancourt with the Third Army. It was not an easy retreat. Rear-guards were furnished first by troops of the 20th, 50th, and 39th Divisions, and the Germans fought with them all night. In conformity with the retirement of the Fifth Army behind the Somme, the Third Army let go still more of the Flesquières salient, and drew its right back through Metz to Equancourt, while farther north other withdrawals to battle positions in the rear were made between Henin-sur-Cojeul and Fampoux. It would have been too much to expect that a line, harassed and battered as was that of the British, could make these withdrawals without mistakes in face of an enterprising enemy. The retirement under pressure opened out a new gap towards morning about Mory, which is some 16 miles west of Cambrai. That presaged trouble, and there was nothing to be hoped for in the region of the Fifth Army's right wing on the Crozat Canal, where the Germans, though repulsed temporarily at one point, had now taken all the crossings they wanted, and were building

up holdings on the British side of the canal in preparation for new onslaughts.

With the Crozat Canal gone, with the right centre of the Fifth Army staggering, with seams and cracks opening elsewhere, General Gough resolved that he dare not ask his troops to stand up another day in their insecure positions against the German reinforcements, which the Allied aeroplanes could descry packing the roads as they still marched up. He decided that the 19th and 7th Corps could not hold the lines defending Péronne, and ordered the 19th Corps back to the Somme, with the 7th to follow, after temporarily holding a short line in front of it. This is the decision for which General Gough was criticized. The subsequent and consequent withdrawals were serious; the difficulties of rectifying the breaches in the line which opened out, as these and interdependent withdrawals were made, were great. But it is at least arguable that had the decision not been taken the resultant chaos would have been worse. It was quite bad enough. In the first withdrawals to the Somme a gap had been left at Ham. The Germans at once perceived, and exploited, it, and crossed the Somme wherever hereabouts a bridge had been left standing. There were not many: the Royal Engineers, with the utmost devotion and courage, had blown up most of them as soon as the retreating corps troops were across. At and about Ham the rear-guards furnished by the 36th, 20th, and 61st Divisions threw the Germans back again, and held them till the retirement was made safe, and the 50th Division, despite its hard two days' fighting experience, did the same farther north. Here at any rate the retreat, though costly, was far from being disastrous. It was, on the contrary, well managed.

But something very awkward had happened, as often it does where two armies join. The Germans, everywhere seeking for new openings, had struck hard at Mory —where the 40th Division won back the village after it had been lost—and at Beugny, at St. Leger, and at Vaulx, all without effect; but at the junction of the Third and Fifth Armies the blow went home. The divisions of the 5th Corps (General Fanshawe), covered by hard fighting rear-guards, had continued their retreat across the Canal du Nord to the third-zone positions near Ytres; and the 7th Corps (General Congreve) should have been falling back parallel with them on to the canal. But the movement left a gap between the two corps, and the Germans pushed into it despite all the efforts of the 47th Division (General Gorringe) to close up. Consequently, the 5th Corps was hustled back beyond the battle zone, and were left on the 23rd (evening) fighting in the open about Rocquigny, while the 7th Corps was struggling to keep its footing on the wrong side of the Tortille River, near Bouchavesnes, and the old Somme battle-front of Sailly-Saillisel. There was, consequently, south of Ytres, great confusion, little coherence, and the prospect of further losses. The redeeming feature of the situation was that down to Ytres the northern line was swinging back in good order; the disturbing feature was that south of it, where the line was breaking back, rather than swinging back, a breach should be opened not between brigades, divisions, or corps, but between the French and British armies. On the afternoon of this critical day General Pétain had agreed to send up the French Third Army as quickly as possible, to take over the imperilled sector south of Péronne —where, not to mince matters, the British Fifth Army was in danger of losing coherence as an army.

Before this could be done, however, there were many moments of peril to be passed, such as arise from unforseen occurrences— especially in the demolition of the mechanism of keeping touch during a retirement; and every slip had to be paid for in men and guns. On the other hand, as the Germans advanced farther over a shattered field of battle, their difficulties increased, together with the price of the advance. On the 24th they pressed past the Ytres battle zone, the Canal du Nord, and the Sailly-Saillisel line, so that the Third Army's right wing had to be swung back behind Bapaume. South of this the irremediable breach gave the Germans ample elbow-room in which to press forward, to cut up isolated British units, and to press severely other and larger ones

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British gunners firing point-blank into advancing masses of the enemy

which had not yet found a position of stability.

Danger was averted only by prompt retreat. The 4th and 5th Corps were both withdrawn behind Bapaume, the first towards Ervillers and Grevillers, the second towards Le Sars, and every reinforcement that could be swept up from Albert was hurried up to support the 7th Corps behind Cléry and Combles. Their good fighting quality checked the Germans in their stride, and enabled a new line to be taken up from the Somme to Longueval. By nightfall the 7th Corps had reached its position, and the 5th Corps prolonged the line through Ligny and Thilloy. The danger was far from being over, however, and the Germans were making great efforts to aggravate it by seizing nine crossings of the Somme south of Péronne (at Péronne the Somme makes a right-angled turn), and a bridge-head at Pargny, as well as that at Ham. Lastly, on 23rd and 24th March, in the extreme southern area between the Somme and the Oise, a very determined attempt was made to break up the British resistance before the French reinforcements could arrive. It failed in its ultimate intention, though Chauny had to be relinquished. In the course of the night French and British troops together were aligned afresh on a new line covering Noyon. No break was likely to follow here; the danger such as it was remained where it had been, in the area of retreat of the Fifth Army.

The first rub came at the old unclosed gap between the 4th and 5th Corps which were not properly in touch, at Grevillers, east of Bapaume, and Bihucourt, both of which had prematurely to be given up. A number of German attacks were beaten off, but in the late afternoon of the 24th the divisions began to fall back individually towards the Ancre, and the gap widened. When the Germans, pressing through it, reached Courcelette and pushed forward advanced units to Pys and Irles, the flank of the 4th Corps behind Grevillers became seriously compromised, and it was obliged to retreat still farther to avoid an attack from behind. It swung the line of the Third Army with it, but finally found touch with the 6th Corps at Boyelles. The other divisions of the Third Army were brought back by Sir Julian Byng, now in charge of all movements north of the Somme, to a line joining Bray-sur-Somme with Albert. There was still an awkward gap about Serre, but the Third Army had now almost found its feet—and the limiting position to which it could be forced. Reinforcements from the armies of General Plumer and General Horne were arriving from the north, and the Germans were finding it harder to hit a sustained blow over the broken roads of the stricken field.

But the situation was far from being as satisfactory south of the Somme, where they had not a compacted army, but a fragmentary one, to deal with. Most of the prepared defensive line along the Somme River and Canal had vanished, and what was left was endangered by the withdrawal of those divisions which had been parallel in line north of the river, to a point so far back as Bray. Moreover, there were no immediate reinforcements to put in to respond to a renewed push on the part of the Germans. The local reserves had gone, the French reinforcements were not yet up, though they were coming; and every mile that the British irregular line went backward gave a longer concave curve to defend. Southward, where the French reinforcements were nearest, the situation, though damaging, was not desperate. The Germans got forward in the night of the 24th, and at dawn of the 25th were battering the heights of Noyon, where the Canal du Nord joins the Oise. A hopeful sign was that the British guns were got away from the heights, thanks to some dismounted Canadian cavalry and a fine counter-attack by the 18th Division, to which were joined the efforts of a French division; and some French Tanks helped to retard the Germans as they debouched from Guiscard. But as Noyon and Guiscard were now gone, the British forces which had fought defensively there were now withdrawn, and on the morning of the 26th the 3rd British Corps handed over the duties to the Third French Army, and was gradually moved away northwards to help out the hard-pressed 5th Corps.

At Nesle a new crisis had supervened.

East of Nesle the Libermont Canal and the Canal du Nord run northwards towards the south-and-north-flowing Somme. North of Nesle the Germans, entering Licourt, had made a gap between the 18th and 19th Corps, and widened it by entering Nesle and crossing the Libermont Canal. Part of the canal was still held, but the 19th Corps, being forced back on Chaulnes, could not hold it safely. The 19th therefore had to fall some distance west of Chaulnes, taking up a new position 10 miles between Hattencourt and Estrées. This still left a gap which the Germans sought at Liancourt Wood. It was closed before the Germans thrust could do much damage, by a brigade (61st) of the 20th Division, which had been brought up in motor-lorries fresh from the fighting farther south, and this heroic expedient enabled the rest of the division to withdraw through Roye. It will be seen how the retreat was living from hand to mouth. A more striking example followed. The Fifth Army was at the end of its resources, and General Gough perforce accepted a suggestion made by General Grant to organize a force out of army schools personnel, tunnelling companies, Canadian and American engineers—every man in short he could lay his hands on—and to dispose them (26th March) on the old line of the outer Amiens defences between Mezières, Marcelcave, and Hamel. The command was afterwards handed over to General Carey, and " Carey's force " became the last barrier in front of Amiens, except for the thin and battle-weary line in the Hattencourt-Frise positions, which were taken up with misgiving on 25th March. If that line proved vulnerable the forces holding it were to fall back to one behind it, Le Quesnel-Rosières-Proyart, 5 miles in front of Carey's force. Proyart is near Bray on the Somme, where the Third Army's line impinged.

On the 26th, as anticipated, Hattencourt was attacked, and the divisions had to fall back fighting, to the line indicated. But this retreat opened out one of those hardly to be avoided gaps between forces—on this occasion between the British and their French allies. The French, finding German troops quick to seize the opening, moving past their northern flank, were forced back beyond Roye, thus further opening the gap. It had to be closed. It was closed by two British divisions—the 30th and 36th—which were thrown back into the battle after having been once withdrawn. The 36th, though outflanked and all but surrounded, held on at Andechy for a day, till 27th March, and just saved the situation. On the 26th, also, the Germans had simultaneously spread out from Nesle towards Roye directly, with a view to aiding the progress of their wedge and of seizing Montdidier, where the French were detraining. The delaying action of the 30th and 36th Divisions frustrated this design also; and this day saw an end to the German chances of separating the French and British forces. A momentous decision, of which such indivisibility was the symbol, was taken on the same day. The command of the Allied armies passed into the hands of General Foch, who thenceforward assumed complete control and responsibility.

The worst was then over: but on the 27th, as on the 26th, and as on days to follow, the British Third and Fifth Armies had to sustain many hard blows, and to pay yet more for their earlier reverses. The lower part of the Third Army's line, from Albert to Bray, had been successfully taken up: but by the mistake of the local commander it was supposed to be a temporary position, and he retired from it towards the Ancre. The mistake could not be remedied, and the Fifth Army's line, which reached the Somme about Proyart, 5 miles farther along the river than the new front of the Third Army, was left unprotected. Stop-gap expedients were ineffectual, and naturally proved expensive; and when, on the 27th, the Germans seized Proyart and, having crossed the Somme along the 5 miles of unprotected river, began to attack the British division (27th), which was there, this force had hardly any way out of its unfortunate and desperate predicament. To make matters worse, there were no reinforcements between Proyart-Rosières and Amiens except that heterogeneous body, " Carey's force ", to which was delegated the holding of the last ditch. The luck and courage of the British army pulled it out of this deplorable situation.

Part of the 1st Cavalry Division was hurried across the Somme from the north; a counter-attack was organized by mixed troops of 2 divisions south-west of Proyart; troops of another division came across after the cavalry; and finally, south of Rosières, mixed troops of yet another 3 divisions held solidly to a 6-mile front. All these blocks in the traffic, by almost individual efforts, kept the Germans from coming along on a wide front of their own, but it did not prevent them from infiltrating the British front; and the next day, the 28th, there were further retreats, several of which had to take the second-best route, till between the Rivers Avre and Luce the wearied, disjointed British divisions were forced back from their temporary front on Marcelcave and Vrely to Carey's line. But if the British resistance was now almost at its last gasp, the Germans were winded too. The pace, the difficulties of getting up across the broken country, had begun to tell on them. They could find the force and the forces for local attacks, but, in the language of the prize ring, though both combatants were staggering, the Germans could not give a knock-out blow. In the end "Carey's force", aided by the cavalry division from the north, and such remnants of the Fifth Army as were not reforming behind it, sufficed to hold the pass. The Germans broadened out the salient; they made progress both on the Luce and the Avre, and pushed back the French as well as the British in operations extending from 29th March to 2nd April. On the latter date their bolt was shot, and near the Somme they had received a set-back on a small scale at the hands of a very mixed force of British cavalry, Australians, and United States Engineers.

But before that a reverse of a much more serious kind had put an end to Ludendorff's hopes of converting the second Somme battle into a decisive German victory. On 28th March a renewed attempt had been made to break the northern pivot of the Third Army by an attack on either side of the valley of the Scarpe, the attack spreading northwards towards Gavrelle so as to take in the right wing of the First Army, held by the 13th Corps (General de Lisle). On the north bank of the Scarpe 3 German divisions were told off for the first line of assault. They were fresh divisions brought up for the purpose, and the 2 German divisions already occupying the sector were to act as reserves to push the assault home by the method of attack in depth. The position aimed at was the line Vimy-Bailleul-St.-Laurent-Blangy; and this having been attained, Ludendorff proposed to send in 3 shock divisions next day to storm the Vimy Ridge. To defend the position Sir Douglas Haig had 2 divisions in line, the 4th (General Matheson), and the 56th (General Dudgeon). South of the Scarpe 4 divisions were to take Arras and the heights (which the 3rd and 15th Divisions were defending), and, in order to prevent reinforcements being sent to the sectors of greatest pressure, 11 other German divisions were sent to engage the British line as far as Bucquoy. The whole of the full-dress plan broke down, the defence being aided by a factor which operated in the British favour for the first time in the great offensive, namely, the weather.

Instead of a foggy morning, 28th March presented the British defence with one which was an artilleryman's ideal. In consequence—and it is a consequence remarkable in an engagement of such magnitude—the British artillery and machine-guns cut the attack to pieces before it got under way. Sir Douglas Haig pays a tribute to the courage with which the German infantry advanced over and over again to the assault in face of a blast of fire as withering as German ingenuity had ever devised when assaults were launched against their own armoured lines, and to the desperation with which they strove to cut their way through the gaps made in the wire. But it was all in vain. The first onset of six waves collapsed in the morning; a second failed in a similar way in the afternoon; and by nightfall the British were reconstructing their outpost line. Their battle zone had not been approached. South of the Scarpe the Germans had attacked on a wider front. They got nearer: it cost them more. The Guards Division and the 31st Division held off their attacks without much difficulty. The 42nd and 62nd Divisions, with some Australians, beat off others, made

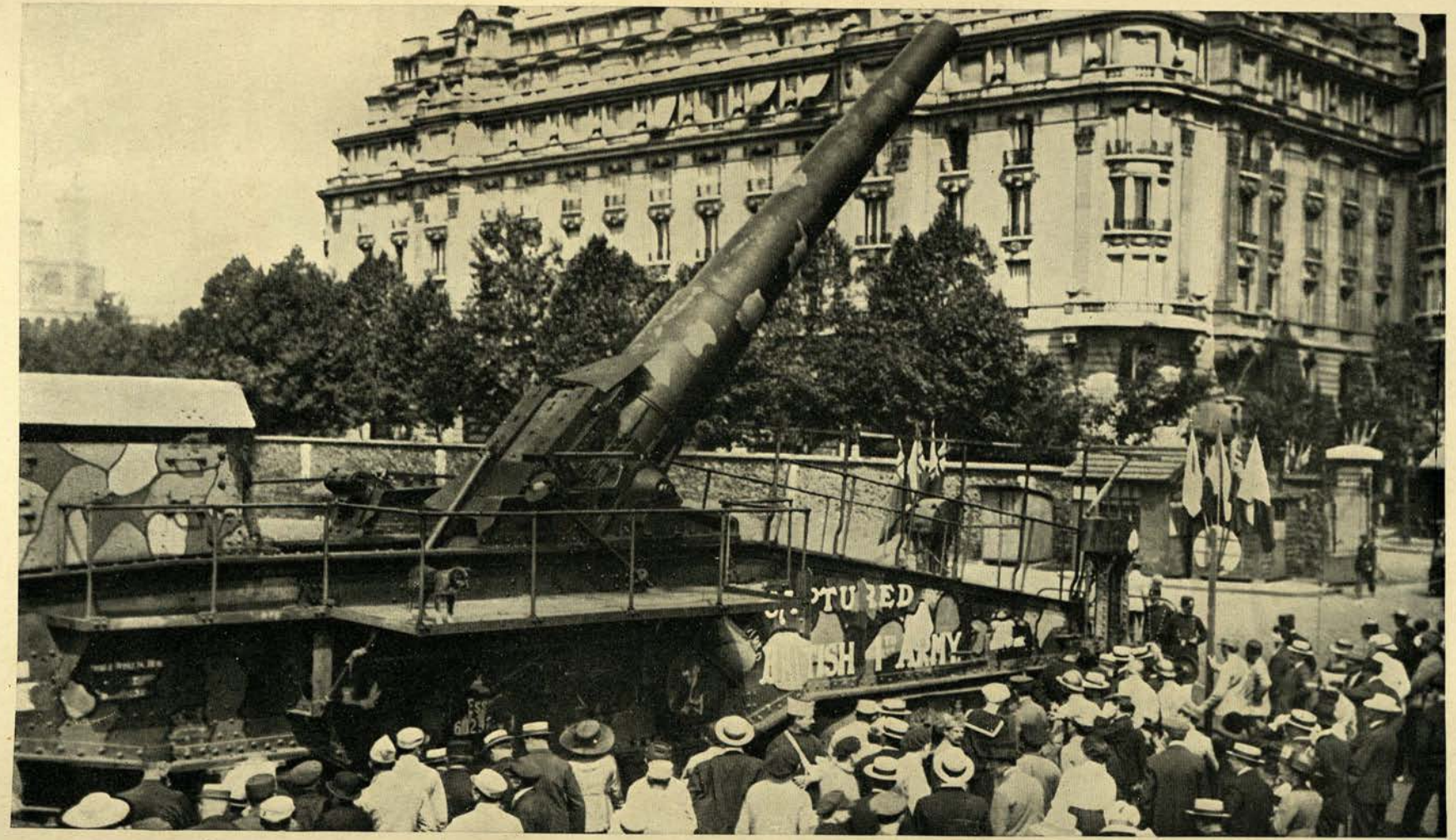
more pertinaciously, at Ablainzeville and Bucquoy. The whole day was a German failure, which, apart from any losses that might be inflicted on the divisions of the British Fifth Army—now engaged in their task of extricating themselves under General Rawlinson[1] (Fourth Army)—put an end to any further enlargement of the gains of the first and greatest of the German 1918 offensives.

The strength of the Allied resistance thenceforth increased day by day, as General Debeney was still further reinforced by units of the First French Army (General Humbert). The German organization made but one more attempt to test it, when, on 4th–5th April, they attacked the slowly-consolidating Franco-British positions south of the Somme. The first attack spread over the whole British front from the river to Hangard, where the Third French Army dovetailed with the British Fifth, and beyond. Two assaults were made with large forces on 4th April, the first being repelled on the right, but having more success on the left towards the river, and the second reversing these results and pushing back the combined Franco-British forces about Hangard Wood. The next day the attack was resumed both at Hangard Wood and in the river sector in the effort to improve these advantages. But the ground gained was slight, and the cost to the Germans disproportionate. The Third British Army was attacked and lost part of its hold on the village of Bucquoy, but on this front also the Germans expended a great many lives without commensurate gain. The operations of the two days were a reverse to them, and were only justifiable in any sense of results achieved in that they may have partially masked their forthcoming offensive at the Ypres salient, known as the Lys Battle, and have compelled the Franco-British command to hesitate in prematurely removing units from the Amiens region. In the foregoing attempt to outline the chief features of the Arras-Cambrai-St.-Quentin-La-Fère Battle most prominence has been given to the movements of the "wing of sacrifice"—the British Fifth Army and its supporter the Third Army. But such a version would be one-sided without at least a mention of the very grave risks which the French Third Army incurred in coming to the Fifth Army's assistance, and in taking over a situation of the greatest difficulty and uncertainty at insufficient notice.

It had been supposed that the Fifth Army, however heavily assailed, would be able to hold out for six days. It gave way, in fact, on the third, and by the end of the second was affording evidence of the precarious hold it had on its position. The French Third Army, as it is now easy to see, should have been more closely aligned with the British right rear. As it was, it had, after coming up, to fight what may be described without fear of misunderstanding as a losing battle for Roye and Noyon; and the masterly stand of the 5th Corps, French Third Army, under General Pellé, from 26th March onwards, was one of the events which kept the Germans from enlarging their advance dangerously to the south, and eventually forced them to transfer their principal attack to the north of the Somme, with what unfruitful results, at Arras for example, has been told. But in front of Montdidier, where the First French Army was detraining, and at other points the situation was often highly critical, and disaster was averted only by a hair's-breadth, and by the skill and resolution of French commanders and French soldiers. The French losses were not light; and they had the same difficulty in extricating some of their divisions that General Rawlinson experienced with those of the Fifth Army. But it should, perhaps, be made clear that after the 27th, though the losses both of British and French went on, and that though at one time, on the British front, "Carey's force" seemed the forlorn hope in front of Amiens, yet by that date the French had brought up yet another Reserve Army, under General Fayolle, for the defence of the road to Paris.

That road being barred, General Ludendorff turned to the second part of his plan, the bid for the Channel Ports. Sir Douglas Haig had been compelled to use up his reserves, and for reinforcements had rightly refused to deplete the sector

[1]General Gough relinquished the command of the Fifth Army, 28th March.



A GERMAN 11-INCH GUN EXHIBITED IN PARIS

Captured with its ammunition train by the Australians. It has a range of 25 miles and was intended for the bombardment of Amiens

about the Vimy Ridge, where a successful German blow would have been fatal. His policy had been proved right by the results of the unsuccessful blow struck there on 28th March. The Flanders Front had been the only one on which he could draw, and when the imminence of a new German offensive in this quarter became known, the reinforcements drawn thence were returned, but were far from being at full strength, or fully rested, after their severe experience on the Cambrai-St.-Quentin battle-field. This was specially true of the 40th, 34th, 25th, 19th, and 9th Divisions, all of which were in the front line of the Lys battle-field at the end of the first week in April. Had the spring been as rainy as the preceding autumn, the British, despite their handicap, would have felt some confidence that no attack launched over the sodden ground could have had any results of great value to its designers. But the ground had dried in weeks of rainless weather, and preparations had accordingly been made for a voluntary withdrawal near Passchendaele, which would shorten the line, and disorganize such German preparations for advance as were visibly being made here; and also for the relief of the Portuguese troops, which had been too long in the trenches near the south of the salient, and had not been hitherto as highly tried as British divisions. The British preparations were anticipated by the Germans, and General Ludendorff, with true military instinct, launched his attack at the unexpected moment, and at the weak spot.

The first attack was made on 9th April (after a feint preparatory bombardment on the 7th) on the northern portion of the front held by the First Army (General Horne), with the 11th Corps (General Haking), and 15th Corps (General du Cane). On 10th April the attack, exploiting its first success, spread to the right of the Second Army (General Plumer), where the 9th Corps (General Hamilton Gordon) was situated. The 15th Corps, early in the battle, was transferred to the Second Army front, and other re-arrangements and interventions became necessary when the German tentative assaults were enlarged as their successes became proven. The first German attack on 9th April, in the direction of Festubert-Armentières was made by the army of General von Quast; on the next day the army of General Sixt von Armin attacked between Hollebeke and Armentières, and thenceforward the two armies acted in concert. Von Quast's advance was made in five columns, of which those on either wing were designed for the demonstrative attack, while the assault to be pushed home was made in the centre by an army corps (von Kraevel) operating in three columns under the command, respectively, of Generals von Stettin (right), von Carlowitz, and von Bernhardi. General Sixt von Armin's army operated in three columns under the commands respectively of Generals Sieger (left corps), von Eberhardt (right), and Marschall.

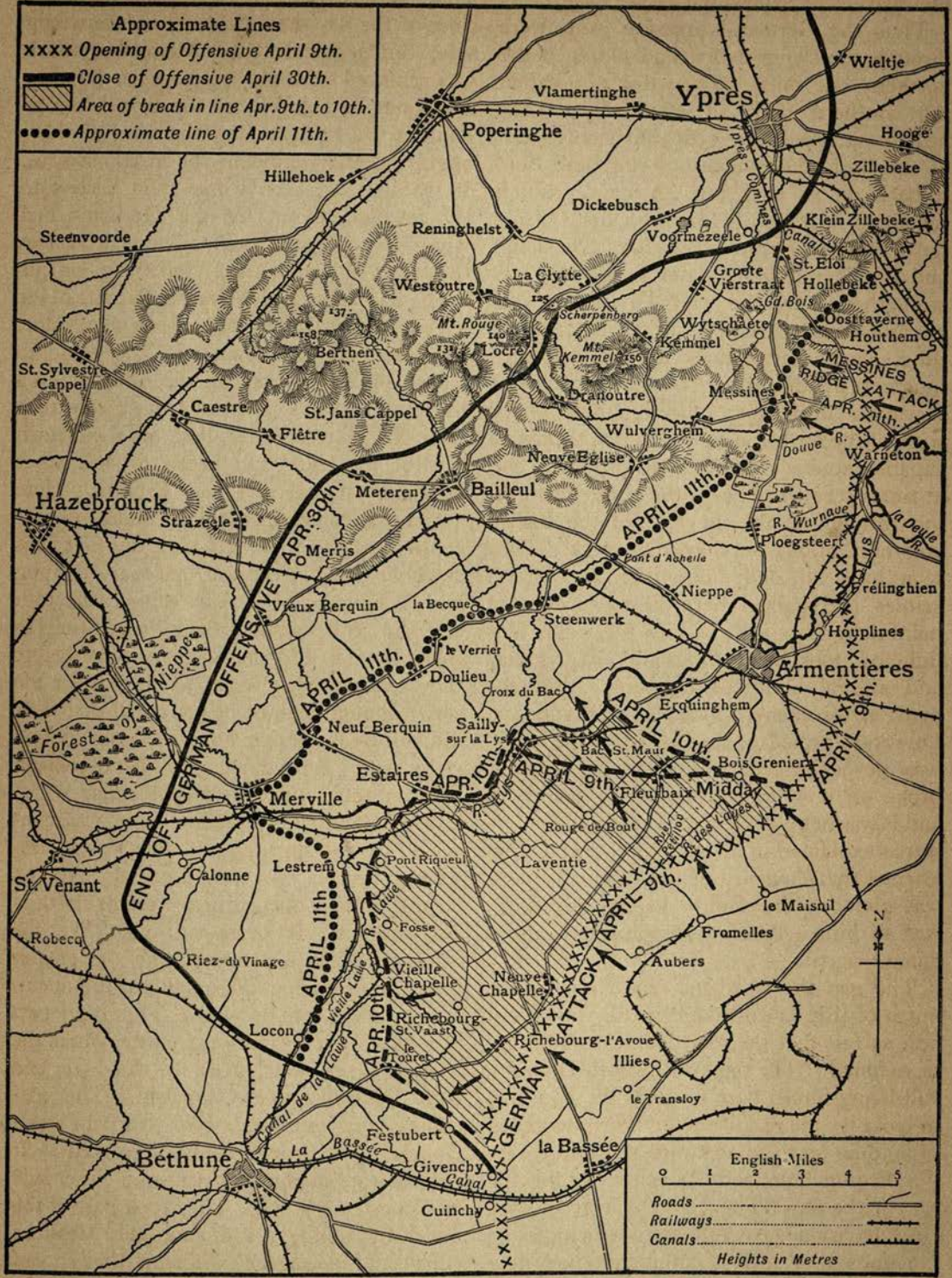
Von Kraevel's army corps was set in motion in the thick fog of the early morning, a circumstance favourable to their determined attacks in mass, because, as in the Cambrai-St.-Quentin onrush, the British artillery could not get to work on the assaulters. They pushed forward very rapidly, and broke into and through the Portuguese trenches at once, and their attack quickly spread over the whole front occupied by the 55th and 40th Divisions, which were respectively south and north of the Portuguese. It soon became apparent, in the words of some of the wounded Midlanders, who began to stream back, that "Jerry had come over" in great force, and that a heavy attack was in progress over a 10-mile front from the Bois Grenier (Armentières) to La Bassée. Two divisions just relieved from the Somme fighting—the 51st and 50th—were moved up on either side of Neuve Chapelle to co-operate; the 50th going to Laventie. The Germans continued to come along fast, and after four hours' fighting broke through the forward defences of the 40th Division (north) and spread farther northwards in spite of all the machine-gun detachments could do. They got beyond Laventie, and actually behind part of the division there, which was holding the village of Petillon. In consequence, this division, losing heavily on its right, had to swing back till, instead of facing

east, it faced south, linking up Bois Grenier, Fleurbaix, and Sailly-sur-la-Lys.

Thus the Germans, pressing as it were through the swing doors, had flattened the northern one open. They did not flatten the southern door so effectually. They heavily attacked the 55th Division, south of the broken Portuguese sector, and bore it back on its left; but its main position remained firm, and it formed a flank facing north between Festubert (north of Givenchy) and Le Touret, which, later in the day, was strengthened by the 51st Division. This circumstance, surveyed at a distance of time, stands out clearly as the definitive moment of the Battle of the Lys. The Germans thereafter, pushing their attack with all the force and skill of which they were capable, attained considerable successes, and at times seemed to be on the verge of breaking through to the junction of the British communications serving that area. They won back all, and more, than the British armies had gained here in four years of painful warfare, and, besides the losses they inflicted, took many thousands of prisoners and several hundreds of guns. But the pivot at Givenchy, which the 55th and 51st Divisions formed on the first day of the battle, was never broken; the German divisions broke on it in their attempts to assault it, and it was here, as General Ludendorff afterwards explained in his memoirs, that he first learned that the spirit of the German troops was giving. The failure to take Givenchy was to him a bitter disappointment and a danger signal.

The gap the Germans made was to the north of this, and through it they poured at first so fast that the rear defences could not be manned. The right of the 40th Division, still being forced back towards the Lys, had to cross it; the rest of the division succeeded in holding on to an awkward position cover- Erquinghem and Armentières for the of the day. The 51st Division and the th Division gave full employment to all ne units they had at command, including their newly-arrived drafts, in trying to hold the bridge-heads of the Lawe River. The Germans brought up guns—no easy matter in that crater-pitted, flat country—and forced crossings at Estaires and Pont Riqueul. They were driven back again, so that at the close of the day they were still on the wrong side; but it was clear that when their attack was renewed with more guns next day they could not be held off; so the British troops holding the bridges blew them up as thoroughly as they could in the circumstances. It would have been worse than useless to try to hold them, for the Germans had vigorously pursued their advantage against the 40th Division, and, following on its heels, had crossed the river at Bac St. Maur over a swiftly-constructed emergency bridge, and then had unhesitatingly laid siege to Croix du Bac, a mile on the other side—a fine feat of arms. Next morning (10th) they were firmly established here on the British side of the river, and began to seek other crossings at Lestrem and Estaires. Here again was another turning-point, imperceptible at the time. It took the Germans a whole day's street and enclosure fighting with 2 British divisions hereabout, the 50th and the 40th, before Estaires was firmly in their hands, and more than that before they reached Steenwerk. This was far too slow; though it must be conceded that their difficulties in getting guns over the ground were very formidable. In hand-to-hand fighting their quality was not great.

Their comparative failure here was concealed by the spreading of their attack elsewhere, for on the 10th General Sixt von Armin's attack opened in the sector north of Armentières. It began in mist, like the other, and had a success which was greater than the first when the quality of the operation is taken into account. The lesser part of it was at its northern extremity, where the Messines positions, held by the 25th and 19th Divisions, were attacked. The machine-gun outposts were overrun, and General von Sieger's columns worked their way forward along the streams on either side of Ploegsteert Wood. They took part of the wood by midday, and captured Messines village and its garrison. Thence they spread over the northern part of the ridge, past Hollebeke to the Ypres-Commines Canal, and pushed the British back to the Wytschaete section of Messines Ridge. A




Germany's Last Bid for the Channel Ports: approximate positions of the Allies' line before and after Ludendorff's Offensive in April, 1918

counter-attack by the South African brigade of the 9th Division restored Messines and Wytschaete, but not the situation, for it was clear that Messines could not be permanently held against strong renewed attacks. From Ploegsteert to Armentières the situation was still less subject to restoration, for the sagging of the line below Ploegsteert exposed the 34th Division at Armentières, and enabled the troops of von Stettin to find touch with the northern wing of von Quast's army. This division had already sustained a heavy frontal attack; it was now threatened dangerously on both flanks, and was prudently withdrawn to the other bank of the Lys. It destroyed the bridges behind it, so that it retreated in good order.

The fighting, and the German advance, pursued the normal course next day. The right-hand pivot between Givenchy and the Lawe River sustained and repelled all the German assaults against it; but the cup north of it was steadily hollowed out. The Germans pushed back the line between Locon and Estaires, and, pressing on to Lestrem, compelled the thinned but yet resisting line of the 50th Division to go back slowly from Estaires to Merville. The retreat was reluctant, and the division inflicted great losses on the Germans while at Estaires, and while retiring from it. Neither Neuf Berquin nor Merville could be held, and Steenwerk was marked to follow them. A more serious and galling sacrifice was imminent in the area of Sixt von Armin's attack. General Sieger's and von Stettin's divisions, pressing on strongly from Ploegsteert towards Neuve Eglise, automatically outflanked the 34th Division, which had temporarily held Nieppe in its retreat from Armentières, and compelled its further retirement towards Bailleul. Armentières, of course, was gone. So also was Messines. The South African Brigade had retaken it, and the other division was still standing solidly at Hollebeke; but the German southward advance to Neuve Eglise had made it impossible to hold on here. The order was given for evacuation, and in a few hours Messines, Hill 63, and that section of the Messines ridge made so famous in 1917, had been renounced, and the line re-drawn from Wytschaete in front of Neuve Eglise and Wulverghem. Wytschaete still was held.

Although in retrospect it is possible to see that the German movement was disappointing to its planners, it seemed at that moment extremely threatening to the British commanders on the spot, who, knowing how worn and tried were their own divisions, and how few the reserves on which they could draw, could hardly view without foreboding an increase of pressure such as the Germans had been able to bring to bear throughout the first five or six days of their southerly offensive. The famous Order of the Day which Sir Douglas Haig issued on 11th April reflects these apprehensions, though it stills them by the confidence of its appeal to the hard-pressed divisions on the Lys to fight it out.[1] The moment chosen for the appeal coincided miraculously with the birth of an urgent necessity on 12th and 13th April, while the defenders waited for reinforcements to arrive. On 12th April one of the more desperate attacks which the Germans made on the left centre of the 51st Division, in front of the La Bassée Canal, seemed to have gone near to success when the front was broken near the Riez du Vinage, but the attack was at last stopped by the courage and resource of two batteries of the 255th Brigade.

The same day witnessed the concentration of forces under Generals von Carlowitz and von Bernhardi on the thin British front from Neuf Berquin to Steenwerk, where two gaps were prised open at La Becque and Doulieu, to open the way to Merris and Bailleul. This was one of those damaging openings which may sap the whole of a position, for east of Merris were all the troops and material awaiting withdrawal from the Messines area. Every effort was made to stop the Germans from coming through. A brigade (33rd Division) was first crammed in, and, following it, pioneers, education officers, cyclists —anybody and everybody available. On their left, troops of 3 other divisions (25th,

[1] "There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end"—Sir Douglas Haig's Army Order, 11th April, 1918

34th, and 49th) stood up to the heavy attack of von Carlowitz's troops, who sought to enlarge the opening, and stopped them in time to give the British line another breathing-space.

It lasted only till next morning, when, pushing up in force through the fog, the Germans turned against the attenuated line of the 29th and 31st Divisions, strung in front of Nieppe Forest from Merville to Vieux Berquin. On their left, roughly parallel to their line, the Germans had entered Merris also, 4 miles from Hazebrouck. It was as trying a situation as any that had been faced; but it was vital that these 2 divisions should not let the enemy through towards Hazebrouck, where the 1st Australian Division was detraining. The Germans saw the point. Their first assaults were made on the south towards Merville, and broke in failure against the Guards 4th Brigade. They made attack after attack on other parts of the line, and got field-guns up to point-blank range. They tore gaps in the line, and the Germans at last seized Vieux Berquin in an expiring effort which had cost them more even than the severely-punished defenders: but the capture came too late. The 1st Australian Division detrained, dug itself in in front of the forest, and the German chance of reaching Hazebrouck fled, never to return.

A less important struggle took place on the same day for Neuve Eglise—lost and retaken—and here was severe fighting along the road to Bailleul. The three divisions —33rd, 34th, and 49th—guarding this sector, which extended to Meteren, were asked only to hold the Germans off till a better foothold could be secured, and the 34th Division was withdrawn to the Ravelsberg heights covering Bailleul on the night of the 13th; and Neuve Eglise, after holding out two days and a night, and being taken only house by house, was given up on the 14th. The limits of the German advance were now being set, and, with one exception, the British were able to take up and maintain the new defensive front on which the Headquarters Staff had decided. But the Germans were too capable not to make all that could be made of their opening, and, after a pause for reinforcements and guns, the 15th April began with an attack on their part on the new British front at Bailleul. The first assault which was repelled was at Wytschaete. It was followed by an attack made by the picked German Alpine Corps, together with 2 fresh divisions from reserve, on Bailleul and the Ravelsberg heights, Bailleul's natural redoubt. The pressure was too great for any resistance which the 2 depleted British divisions—33rd and 34th —could offer there, and, despite the best fight these could put up, the Germans gained a footing on the ridge's eastern end, and worked along it till by dusk they held it all. Bailleul fell with its ridge, and at midnight the British line was falling back to the defences between Meteren and Dranoutre. Simultaneously, the Passchendaele Ridge, and all the ground so hardly won there with the best blood of Britain and her Dominions in the sodden October of 1917, was given up. It was a black day, in which the clearing sky was hard to see. Yet it was clearing, and the French reinforcements promised by Marshal Foch were close behind the shortened salient.

A perceptible sign was a distinct slowing down of the German energy. General von Quast's army south of Meteren was evidently finding the task of making its way across the crater-filled, market-garden country south of Armentières too much for it; and General Sixt von Armin, with better going in the north, had now no opportunities of surprise. Everything had to be fought for, and he was suffering more losses than he could inflict against lines which were again receiving the support of nearer artillery. Nevertheless, the Germans were far from being done with. They made a number of strong attacks on the line from Meteren and Wytschaete, and forced their way at a cost into both villages. This preliminary was followed next day by the first attempt to reach Mont Kemmel. Von Armin's engineers had built up roads behind his advance with remarkable enterprise, and along them on the firmer ground guns could be, and were, got up; so that the assault was launched to the accompaniment of a heavy complement of gas-shells. But the attack

completely broke down in front of the 34th, 49th, and 17th Divisions, while the 33rd Division and the 1st Australians dealt with the wing attacks at Meteren and Merris. The next day was brighter still from the British standpoint, for on it the last great attempt, made in response to Ludendorff's adjurations to break down the Givenchy-Festubert pivot and to find a southward way out of the salient, entirely failed. The assault was made on a 10-mile front, from Merville to Givenchy, and lacked no assistance of heavy-artillery preparation, or of fresh resources in men. At Givenchy and at Festubert so ferocious was the attack that it gained a footing and held on desperately; but it could not stay. The 1st British Division (General Strickland) won back the ground before night fell: and at no other point but this—which was evidently that where victory was most desired—did the Germans make any impression whatever. Ludendorff's anxieties about the *moral* of his forces may well have taken their birth from this episode.

The French reinforcements were now coming in fast, and were taking over the sector from Meteren and Wytschaete in order to give the tired British divisions an opportunity to recuperate. This relief, however, was not an unmixed blessing. The Franco-British line was beginning to settle down; on the south the German failure at Givenchy and Festubert, following on that at Mont Kemmel, had given the impression that the enemy's bolt was shot, and that, as in the Cambrai-St. Quentin sector, a period of quiescence had arrived while a blow was being prepared elsewhere. In fact one blow was already maturing in the St. Quentin area, where the French First and Third Armies held the curve behind Noyon and in front of Montdidier, and the calm in the Lys area was equally deceptive. On 25th April the Germans began an attack in the grand manner with 9 divisions, of which 5 were freshly brought up on the 8-mile front from Bailleul to the Ypres-Commines Canal, part of which was held by British divisions and part by French which had not yet consolidated their positions. The German attack was directed by General Sieger and General von Eberhardt, Sieger's corps being north of Wulverghem, Eberhardt's to the south. The artillery preparation, of a very heavy character, started before dawn, and the assault began shortly after full daylight. Von Eberhardt's Bavarians plunged straight at the Kemmel crest, his left wing pivoting on Bailleul. Sieger's division, which was in fewer numbers on the right, attempted to drive in a wedge between the French and British at Wytschaete, whence the British 4th Division, with troops from the 49th, held the ground.

The French bore the brunt of the heaviest fighting, and the day did not go well for them. The Germans worked their way round the lower slopes, and in five hours captured Kemmel village and the crest of the hill. The British troops at Wytschaete held out longer, clinging till after midday to the Grand Bois. Later in the day the German attack spread north of this to the front of the 21st Division, where a premature retirement would have left the 9th Division to be outflanked. But though the line was forced back, it went back all together, and finally rested, unbroken, on a line running from Hill 60, near Wytschaete, behind the Grand Bois, to Voormezeele, not far from the canal. Here the British were able to find touch with the French at La Clytte. The reverse was damping, but it was not one that the Germans were able to convert further to the Franco-British disadvantage. A counter-attack was organized in which French and British troops regained Kemmel, and took and kept prisoners. The village could not be kept, but the counter-attack destroyed the prospects of a successful renewal of the German effort; and von Eberhardt was quite unable to make further ground. Consequently, the capture of Mont Kemmel remained an isolated stroke.

Nevertheless it was a loss that could be ill-afforded, because the Ypres salient—with Messines and Kemmel both gone—was overlooked as much as it had been in the worst days, and also because, if the Germans made a further advance, to Voormezeele for example, the British troops and material still in the salient would have to be evacuated in circumstances of great difficulty. The insurance against this possibility was effected,

and could only be effected, by a further withdrawal; and consequently, on the night of 26th–27th April, the line was re-drawn through Pilkem, Wieltje, Zillebeeke Lake, and Voormezeele. It was an undesirable position, and, on paper, the Germans were nearer to the Channel ports than ever they had been. But they approached no nearer. Their one additional effort to do so, on 29th April, when they set in motion their last attack in force on the Franco-British front from Dranoutre to Voormezeele, broke down as ineffectually as that on the southern sector of Givenchy and Festubert eleven days before. At one time a decisive success seemed to be within their grasp, when they reached Locre, and the Scherpenberg ridge behind Kemmel; but the French, who had smarted severely under the loss of Kemmel, were in no mind to lose another vital point. They retook both. The rest of the attack, made on the British 21st, 49th, and 25th Divisions, was a very costly business to the Germans, for, as at Arras, the British artillery was prepared; the mass formation crumpled in front of it, and the one wave of assault that got through was met with the bayonet—perhaps the last German assault in 1918 to be so repelled.

The German attack of 29th April was a complete failure, and its end in a bayonet fight was significant of the change that was slowly, but so slowly as to be imperceptible, coming over the 1918 campaign. It marked the end of the attempts to break the British. They had been great attempts, worthy of the great military mind which had devised them. Ludendorff had left one British army, the Fifth, a skeleton; he had driven back another almost on to its communications. He had taken tens of thousands of prisoners and hundreds of guns. But the German divisions he had used had suffered even more severely than those he had engaged; they were beginning to break in his hands.

## CHAPTER XV

### GERMANY'S OFFENSIVE ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1918— THE ATTACKS AGAINST THE FRENCH

Marshal Foch assumed official control of the French and British armies on 27th March, 1918. At that time the British armies consisted of 58 divisions, of which 46 were attracted to the area attacked by the first great German thrust towards Amiens; the French armies, directed by General Pétain, numbered about 70 divisions. Foch's reserves consisted of some 60 divisions, and there were some quarter of a million Americans, mostly distributed east of Champagne. The gap created by von Hutier in the British lines by the disruption of the Fifth Army was not wide enough to permit the development of an irresistible German thrust towards Amiens, and Ludendorff made continuous efforts to widen it, so as both to obtain more elbow-room and to avoid counter-attacks on his flanks. One such attempt was the abortive attack on the British Third Army at Arras; the others took the form of attacking the French armies which Foch had sent up to the Oise, and which, being in contact with the Germans, might attack their rear and flank.

The consideration of these attempts dates from 28th March, when the French line was strongly posted from where it crossed the Oise at Pont l'Evêque, on Mont Renaud, thence to Plemont, and south of Noyon, Lassigny, and Montdidier. Foch at that date considered that by this wall he had narrowed the German avenue within limits that must presently bring their advance to a standstill. Ludendorff therefore attacked this side wall at Plemont (28th), but the attacks were unsuccessful. The French (General Humbert, Third Army) retorted with a counter-attack between Lassigny and Montdidier. On the 29th and 30th further

unsuccessful German attacks were made on General Humbert, and after a fierce struggle, which extended from the right of his line at Mont Renaud and Plemont to Orvillers, on its left, the Germans collapsed in fatigue. Thus General Humbert and his Third Army created a barrier against the German attempt to thrust south-east to Compiègne. Nearer the British and Amiens, General Debeney and the First French Army had the part to play of similarly barring the German advance from Montdidier to Moreuil, across the River Avre, a path which, if pursued as far as the River Noye, would have cut Amiens off from the south. Thus the First French Army put a patch on the bulge which the German advance had created, while the remnants of the British Fifth Army, with their reinforcements, put patches on it farther north and nearer Amiens. Debeney had, to help him, when his own army arrived, the British 18th Army Corps, which now formed the left of his line, as General Humbert's touched the right of it.

Debeney's business was to hold the line of the Avre, though the first preoccupation of his divisional leaders was to assist the British 18th Corps in the protection of Amiens. This double task was rendered more difficult both by the extreme German pressure on the retreating British, whose divisions were fighting sometimes independent, rather than co-ordinated, rear-guard battles, and by the fact that the French army did not, and could not, come up as a whole, but only in divisions, which were used up in places where advancing German forces rendered their intervention most urgent. The German advance was still being pushed with great skill and energy, especially where it was a question of marching rather than fighting, and the combined result of the circumstances just outlined was that Montdidier was lost on the 27th and a 10-mile gap left between the French and British. General Fayolle, in command of General Foch's reserves, sent up reinforcements to help Debeney hold the vital line from Moreuil to Montdidier till the First Army could come up in force, while 2 divisions from Humbert's Third Army were sent round to fill the gap south-west of Montdidier.

The 28th was the anxious day, for the Germans, alive to the situation, and still with a chance of getting in between French and British, were bringing up 7 divisions to break Debeney's tenuous line, and put what remained of the British Fifth Army adjoining out of action. But the actions fought were inconclusive; the Germans made some progress to the north, but little to the south, and on Good Friday (29th March), the day selected by the Kaiser for firing the new long-range gun on Paris, the renewed attack met with a reinforced resistance. The French, together with the British, were pushed back to the line of the Avre, but there they stuck with a tenacity worthy of divisions which had fought at Verdun. The 56th Division, which was in the hottest fighting since it arrived with the first of the reinforcements, especially distinguished itself. On the 30th again the Germans, who were not lightly to be baulked of the prize which they had sought with such determination, and for which they had sacrificed so much, attacked the whole Avre line with all the forces they had brought up. They took Moreuil, but that was the limit of a success for which they paid heavily and for which a number of their divisions showed little stomach. Other attacks, renewed on the 31st, shared the same fate, and accomplished no more. The losses were now beginning to add up against the attackers, whose lavish use of divisions was powerless to infuse into those which bore the burden of the attack the spirit of the shock troops, or the confidence of those who had walked in behind overwhelming artillery preparations. The Germans simply could no longer prosecute here—without a fresh start—attacks on a wide front; and by the end of March the French left flank (Debeney) held the road to Amiens, and the right flank (Humbert) barred the road to Compiègne and Paris.

By 2nd April General Debeney reported that the connection between the French and British was cemented. On 4th April his confidence was tested and endorsed by strong German attacks, made by new divisions joined to the old, on the British front from the Somme to Hangard, where it dovetailed with the French, and on the French front

BEFORE THEIR HEROIC STAND ON THE CHAMPAGNE FRONT: GENERAL GOURAUD ADDRESSING HIS TROOPS

The Army of Champagne broke the onslaught of the Germans in the last great advance towards the Marne, July, 1918

down to Montdidier and beyond. This attack, made by 14 German divisions, and driven forward at a good many points with great determination, made so little impression on either British or French that Debeney issued orders for counter-attacks on the following day. They were so far successful that the German advance may be regarded as having been stayed on the battle-field in front of the First French Army, while on the Third Army front the German Commander-in-Chief was impelled, for the present at any rate, to mark time. It cannot be too pointedly emphasized that from 27th March to 4th April the French First Army was very highly tried, and though it had not to sustain, as the British Fifth Army had done, an overwhelming attack, it had had to fight in extemporized positions and formations against a resolute enemy whose successes had given him confidence.

Before the main German attack, which began on 21st March, and by 2nd April had driven the great Somme-Oise salient in the Allied line, that line had run beyond the Oise to Barisis (the junction of the British and French), and had then been continued by the French Sixth Army through the lower Forest of Coucy, and beneath the Forest of St. Gobain. In the revised situation the French line, as already stated, crossed the Oise at Pont l'Evêque, with Mont St. Renaud as its strongest point north of the Oise, while on the southern bank it ran through Sempigny, Pontoise, and opposite Chauny (north bank), crossing the Ailette to reach its old delimitation. This line was, in respect of its Forest of Coucy sector, difficult to hold, and the French were prepared to retire from it under compulsion. This compulsion made its appearance on 6th April, when von Boehn heavily assaulted it and captured Chauny on the right of his advance. On 7th April the left wing of von Boehn's attack forced the French back to the western bank of the Ailette, and on to Coucy-le-Château, whose historic keep the Germans had blown up in their retreat of the spring of 1917. At Coucy-le-Château, which was held with great determination, severe losses were inflicted on the assaulters, but in view of the unfavourable character of the line the French held, there was no alternative but to retire from it with as little loss as possible. The loss was not inconsiderable, and by 10th April the new French position, after crossing the Oise, ran on its southern bank past Quierzy to the confluence with the River Ailette, thence along the Oise-Aisne Canal to Vauxaillon and Anizy. On the day preceding this (9th April) a determined attack, renewed with new divisions throughout the day, and calling for equally determined resistance on the part of the British and the French, was made where the Allies jointly held the line near Hangard.

10th April is memorable also for the official announcement of the part which Americans were taking in the fighting. A body of United States engineers had rendered great assistance to the Australians on the Somme during the final adjustments of the British line of retirement. Henceforward American troops, at the solicitation of their commander, General Pershing, were used wherever they could be most useful. Some were brigaded with the British, and others went to Debeney's army, others to Toul, and yet others were destined to take part in the great counter-stroke which Foch delivered between Soissons and the Marne—there to write the proud name of Château-Thierry on their regimental colours. The first individual action fought by the Americans was a counter-stroke at Seicheprey, north-west of Toul (20th April), in which the United States troops, after losing the village, won it again. On 30th April an American regiment was in action with the French Sixth Army on the Oise-Aisne canal.

The action of Villers-Bretonneux, a reference to which must be here interpolated, took place on 23rd April. It marks more decisively than any other single event the transference of the weight of the German offensive from the British to the French fronts, though the action took place before equilibrium was reached on the Lys front. After 5th April, when Australians re-established the British line in front of Villers-Bretonneux, the line from Albert to the junction with the French, which for a brief space had been held solely by Australian

troops, was reinforced by 2 British divisions (8th and 18th) and New Zealanders: one British division going in front of Villers-Bretonneux. On 23rd April the Germans attacked this part of the line with 4 divisions, and brought some of their own new Tanks into action. They gained Villers-Bretonneux and then the British Tanks took a hand in the game. The Germans were stopped, and a night counter-attack, made with the 4th and 5th Australian divisions, and by the 18th British division, succeeded in surrounding the German troops in Villers-Bretonneux and the adjoining woods. Next morning part of the 18th Division attacked the village, and the net result of the action was the complete expulsion of the Germans with a loss of 1000 prisoners. It was one of the most brilliant of the many Australian successes under General Monash, the Corps Commander, then and thereafter.

For some time there were nothing but local actions, often violent, but indecisive, at many points of the two salients created on the Somme and on the Lys, where the Germans sought either to improve their positions, or the Allies endeavoured to diminish German advantages. Both sides were fencing for time. The Germans still had some 25 divisions in reserve; the Allies could not be sure, and they certainly would have been wrong had they assumed, that the German offensive was exhausted; and accordingly their tactics had still to be conducted on a defensive basis. The defensive attitude was at this time one which most favoured the plans of the Allies, because the longer they waited the greater and more efficient would be the reinforcement received by them from the American troops, which were now arriving in large numbers, though their war training was far from being complete.

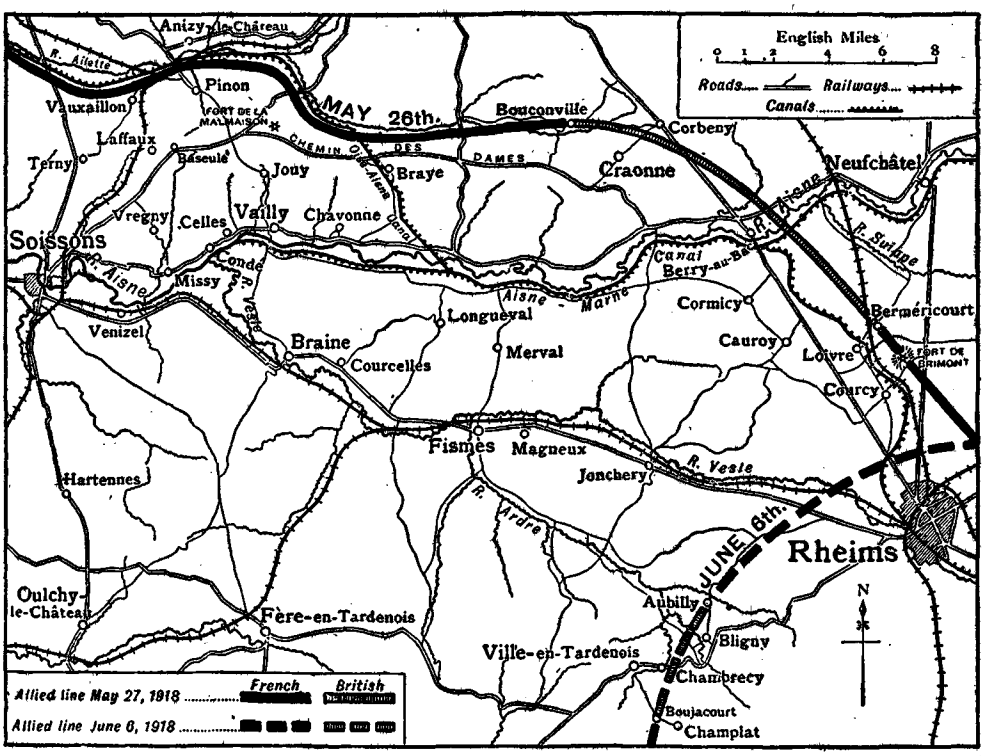
To the Germans inactivity was, from the same point of view, undesirable and foolish; for while they retained the power of striking they stood at an advantage, because they could, like the server in a tennis match, get in the first blow and " place " it. In other words, they could choose, rather than the defenders, when and where to strike—they had the initiative. They had another advantage, which might be represented in a characteristic American phrase—they had the power to keep their enemy guessing. Marshal Foch might suspect them, for example, of the intention to exploit their first or second success further, and to renew their attempts to reach either Amiens or Calais. Ludendorff's disappointment with the fighting-power revealed by the German troops on the Lys, added to his anxiety about Foch's real intention, probably deterred him from pursuing the Calais venture; and, as already indicated, the road to Amiens remained too narrow over the shell-pitted avenue that von Hutier's army had made for itself, while the French stood on the Oise and behind Montdidier. It became necessary, therefore, to strike at the French on the Oise, both in order to disconcert Foch's plans and to obtain greater freedom for manœuvre. Marshal Foch expected the blow to be struck, but though there had been a number of indications that it would fall between Soissons and Rheims, it does not appear on a review of the circumstances that he anticipated either its precise direction or its weight.

The withdrawal of the Franco-British line had compelled the French, under pressure from von Boehn, to accept a less favourable position than that which they had occupied since their conquest of the Chemin-des-Dames and their tentative approach through the Coucy Forest towards Laon. Their line (as in part already indicated) now ran behind the Oise, and the Oise-Aisne Canal and the Ailette in respect of its western part; then in front of the Chemin-des-Dames, as far as Corbeny, in respect of its centre; and thence on to its right, through Berry-au-Bac towards Rheims. This ground was occupied by the Sixth French Army, supported by the 9th British Corps of 4 divisions—the 8th, 21st, 25th, 50th, all good fighting units, but sent to the front between the Chemin-des-Dames and Rheims to rest!

The German preparations for attack were very well concealed, and some of the methods of concealment were appreciated and understood only when the war was over, for the Germans brought the art of camouflage to an intricate perfection unapproached by the

Allies. It was one of their veritable scientific weapons, and it supplied the element of surprise, on this occasion, for it can hardly be contended that Marshal Foch was not surprised. The German main attack was made by the army of von Boehn along a wide front stretching from the confluence of the Ailette, past the Chemin-des-Dames, to Berry-au-Bac and beyond. This attack was made by an

These masses were set in motion on the early morning of 27th May, after an artillery preparation the brevity of which, despite its intensity, was intended to conceal the enemy's intentions. The Germans depended on the secrecy of their preparations and their numbers both for surprise and success. Their expectations were justified. Wichura's corps overran the forward French positions




Map showing the approximate position of the Allied Line north-west of Rheims before the German Attack of 27th May, 1918, and the position of the Allied Line west of Rheims on 6th June, 1918

army corps, under General Wichura, along the Chemin-des-Dames, with 2 other army corps (Generals Winckler and Conta) echeloned with it as far as Corbeny, and another army corps (General Larisch) supporting it. An additional army corps (von Schmettow) covered Berry-au-Bac, and found touch with von Below's army on its left. On the other, the western side of the attack, were 2 other army corps (Hoffman and François) in the neighbourhood of Noyon, where it does not seem presumptuous to imagine that Foch was better prepared for an attack.

on the northern slopes of the Chemin-des-Dames; Winckler, attacking in depth on a narrow front, took the Cerny heights, and, aided by Conta's attack, this spear-head pressed forward towards Hurtebise Farm. Wichura's corps, after its initial success, found resistance stiffening against it, but the combination of his left with Winckler's right forced a way to Braye-en-Laonnais, whence the German attack could spread fanwise along the ridge to the east. Farther to the right von Larisch's corps, coming up on the right rear of Wichura, took the high ground

on the road leading from Laffaux northwards, and thus, in a few hours, all that ravined clump of hills which forms the western fist of the Chemin-des-Dames, and which the French had conquered so laboriously in the Battle of Malmaison (1917), fell into German hands, and the Chemin-des-Dames was turned.' The French resisted desperately at points, but along the ridge their third lines had gone, and they had no option but to retreat down the southern roads and ravines towards the Aisne.

The Germans poured onwards with practically nothing in front of them—open warfare indeed!—and by midday had a line stretching from Laffaux to Chavonne, which is on the river, and from Chavonne to Berry-au-Bac were lining the river. They were actually across the river at Chavonne, as well as 3 miles farther along, and were in practical command of this stretch of the Aisne. Thus the German centre had succeeded beyond all reasonable expectations or fears. On the flanks of the centre the resistance to them was stronger, and longer continued, but it was a backward-falling resistance, and Vailly succumbed in spite of its desperately-struggling defenders. When that was gone the Aisne was in the grasp of the Germans here, with nothing to hinder them but desperate men in machine-gun posts, so that before the day was over they were not only past the Aisne, but the Aisne-Marne Canal, and on to the River Vesle (which joins the Aisne at an acute angle) at Courcel, at Courcelles, Bazoches and Fismes.

It was a deep and tremendous thrust, and there was hardly any redemption of its effects. The British troops on the French right, and between the Chemin-des-Dames and Rheims had not been overrun, but they had been compelled, by the continuation of German pressure and the retirement of the French forces on their left, to fall back before von Below to a position facing north-west between the Aisne and the Vesle, where they formed, so to speak, the eastern concavity of the cup created by the German attack. At the other extremity of the line the French resistance had prevented the Germans from advancing beyond the plateau of Vregny. It was a serious day's work for the Allies, and a photograph, widely published in the German *Illustrierte Zeitung*, of French prisoners packed on the road leading to Laon, affords ample confirmation of their assertion that a number of divisions completely lost all formation.

Indeed, the progress of events next day confirms the claim. The Germans never failed to push a success to the utmost, and though one may reasonably surmise that the first day's results surprised them, they were ready to improve them by renewed action. The French gallantly made counter-attacks in the direction of Laffaux, but these were smothered by the German weight of reinforcements, and all that happened in that sector on 28th May is but the tale of heroic and futile resistance at the Fort de Condé north of the Aisne, and Fismes and Braisnes south of it on the Vesle. The British divisions, having lost severely on the 28th, could make no effective stand on the 29th, and they too were forced back across the Vesle, being gradually pushed back south-eastwards on their side of the created salient. The general effect of the German pressure on the 29th was to deepen and broaden the cups, so that by the end of it von Boehn's division could advance over the Vesle on a wide front, though about Soissons, and in front of Rheims, the defensive flanks still held. But it was becoming clear that the Soissons front was shaking, for the Germans were still making progress between the Ailette and the Laffaux road. At the other pivot, where the British 9th Corps was stationed in the Ardre valley, a reinforcement in the shape of the British 19th Division was rapidly sent up, and here the line was firmer. By the morning of the 29th the British stood like the cross bar of the letter A, the legs of which were the River Vesle and the Aisne-Marne Canal.

The French Commander-in-Chief (General Pétain) had used up all his local reserves, even to working companies, to stop an onrush which in effective rapidity was as marked as that with which von Hutier had overwhelmed Gough's Fifth Army in March, and even the advent of reinforcements from General Reserve, though they slowed the

Germans down, could not stop them. On the 29th the mid-flood rolled on till it reached the low hills which separate the country of the Aisne from the country of the Marne. On the flanks, where the Germans strove to uproot the pivots, they captured Betheny, and the first railway station out from Rheims, while in the valley of the Ardre they fought their way up, pressing back the British as far as Faverolles. On the Soissons side, Soissons itself was captured, important if slight progress was made to the west of it, while east of it Wichura's divisions set foot on the road which leads from Soissons to Château-Thierry. By the night of 29th May Larisch's corps had captured the important Mont de Paris, on the south of Soissons, and the corps of von Hutier and François, coming into play on the right of what had hitherto been the main German attack, came across the Ailette and the Oise-Aisne Canal between Warnecamp and Vauxaillon, and crossed the Oise itself between Warnecamp and Pontoise. The whole French line was being wrenched away from Noyon eastwards, and was hourly sagging lower towards the Marne.

It was to sag still farther. The 2 corps which had come over the Chemin-des-Dames and the Aisne almost without a check reached the Ourcq, and, passing through a line of defence which was full of gaps, or breaking through it where unsupported resistance was offered, got to Oulchy-le-Château, halfway along the road which leads from Soissons to Château-Thierry on the Marne. They now held practically the whole northern half of the main road; and eastwards were at Fère-en-Tardenois, the centre of the rolling, wooded, semi-roadless country between the Aisne and the Marne. Farther east the German left wing had joined hands with the right-wing corps of its army in front of Rheims, and the 2 corps were curling round Rheims, pivoting on their captured points of Betheny and La Neuvillette (the northern suburb of the cathedral city), and aiding Conta's corps in the march southward. Von Boehn's corps, marching fastest on this side of the centre, pressed on through the woods and reached the Marne on the night of 30th May. Here the Germans spread along the river from Brasles (2 miles from Château-Thierry), through Jaulgonne, where the road from Fère-en-Tardenois crossed the river, to Vincelles, where it was curved back from the Marne up the little tributary Semoigne. It was a 10-mile occupation which would easily enable them to cross.

This was, in fact, their high-tide mark, though they actually crossed the Marne and went farther south; for here at last the Allies began to re-act, imperceptibly at first, but with a stiffening tenacity that was to take the heart out of the German triumph. The first symptom came from the appearance of American reinforcements, eager to prove their worth, at Château-Thierry. They took up a position stretched in an arc across the main road, and there, with the French, fought back the Germans. The fighting went on for a week, the new southern pivots of Château-Thierry on the west, and the upper valley of the Aisne, where the British 9th Corps acted with the French 5th Corps, holding firm. Inside the curve, now pressed nearly as far south as it was to go, the Germans were here and there brought to a standstill, and in a few places forced back. But while waiting for an increased reinforcement, which was to give them sufficient momentum to cross the Marne with success, they ballooned the salient out westwards beyond the Château-Thierry road towards Veuilly-la-Poterie, south of Oulchy-le-Château (the midway point), and towards the forest of Retz in front of Villers-Cotterets.

Here their advance temporarily paused, and Ludendorff, seeing that it was on altogether too narrow a front—the merest glance at a map will show how deep the pocket was for its width—entered on the second part of his plan to open the mouth of the pocket wider, and to dig down into it a parallel thrust. In other words, he operated with that army of von Hutier which stood between Montdidier's and Noyon facing the Oise—the direction from which, as we have surmised, Foch expected the first thrust to take place, instead of in the directions over the Chemin des Dames which it had actually assumed. This new attack began on

9th June, on a 20-mile front, from Montdidier to Noyon. The attack was cut in half by the River Matz, which flows in a curving south-easterly way into the Oise above Compiègne: and the assault was in fact a thrust for that place—a milestone on the way to Paris.

The assault was made on the same principles, and with the same tactics, as previous ones, even to the short intense bombardment in which gas-shells and the bombs from trench-mortars were the chief means of offence. The infantry, pushed forward in rapidly succeeding waves, engaged the French line at daylight of 9th June. This line ran behind Montdidier (left or west) and Rollot, crossed the Matz at Canny, fell behind Lassigny, and in front of Plemont, went on through woods in front of the little River Divette to Mont Rénaud, and then crossed the Oise. It was best protected, by woods and rough country, on the Mont Rénaud side. The ensuing engagement more or less reflected these characteristics of the line. On the Montdidier flank, where it was highly important to resist pressure, the French gave way but little; and on the eastern flank the German progress was also slight, the French vigorously counter-attacking, and clinging to the valley of the Divette. In the centre the line sagged much more, and the Germans pushed up the Matz for nearly 5 miles. That was a not inconsiderable gain, though it compared poorly with those of the last surprise offensive, and its value was depreciated by the narrowness of the front of advance, and the resolution with which the French wings were resisting and reacting.

Von Hutier's evident task was to enlarge the front on which he had pushed back the French centre. He did this in a way that promised fairly well the next day (10th June), edging outwards on either side of his wedge till he had broadened its cutting edge from some 4 miles to 8 miles in all, about its centre at Ressons. He also did better on the eastern wing. For here, though the ground was cut up and difficult, the woods and ravines enabled the German method of infiltration (carried on by large numbers of men) to get into Thiescourt, through the wood, and to trickle over towards Bethencourt, while the French line here was forced to bend back in a loop towards the Oise and Ribecourt. But a day which had thus some advantageous prospects for the Germans—especially as their advance along the western bank of the Oise prejudiced the position of the French troops along the eastern bank, and compelled them to fall back away from the river, had nevertheless one awkward defect. On the Montdidier flank, where, across the open, rolling country, no infiltration was possible, but only a frontal attack against a French front between Rubescourt and Courcelles, that had moved very little, and was almost immovable, they had left an unbeaten enemy who might fall on the flank of their newly-created salient. That is what did happen. Below Courcelles, where the line sagged deep, and where von Hutier was trying to widen it at the bottom, the French first yielded some ground (at Méry), and then, coming back like a string that is again stretched taut, retook the village and put up a new fence behind St. Maur and Marquéglise (the German "farthest south"). That was on the night of 10th June, and next day they began a counter-attack on a larger and less improvised scale, from Rubescourt to St. Maur. They had got up some Tanks, and their furious attack was apparently an unpleasant shock to the Germans, for it retook a mile and a half of ground, captured a thousand prisoners, and left the German advance in much the same position as that in which the morning of 10th June had found it.

Evidently von Hutier's push had encountered a different reception, and must expect a very different fate, from those of previous offensives. June 11th saw very little change in the situation, and such little improvement as the Germans were able to effect in it was only gained by great effort. On 12th June a diversion was made by von Boehn's army on the other side of the Oise (towards the Aisne) and after this day's intermission von Hutier's troops made one more effort to shift the French western pivot about Courcelles (13th June). They found the French quite prepared, and the

German efforts were stifled at the outset. Von Hutier's offensive had made a dent, but it was useless, and consequently a failure which had cost far more than it was worth. It had lost guns and men in the counter-attacks. The diversion begun by von Boehn's army just referred to (12th June) was of quite a determined character, and extended on a line from Amblény along the little tributary which falls into the Aisne just north of the village, and runs previously through Dommièrs, St. Pierre Aigre, and Coeuvres. The possession of this line would have been valuable as a means of getting round the Forest of Retz to Villers-Cotterets. The fighting in and about these villages went on for three days, but one or other of them changed hands more than once, and the Germans could not secure them, being eventually compelled to abandon a movement which was beyond their spending powers. Von Hutier's effort had failed, von Boehn's advance to the Marne was an awkward, perhaps a dangerous investment. Ludendorff attempted one more throw in mid-June, and sent forward von Below to a direct assault on the outer entrenched lines, west and east, with which the French defended Rheims. The attack (18th June) was an unredeemed failure; there was no more obvious symptom that, whatever Ludendorff's reserve divisions might be suited for, the stomach for assaults against a determined and unsurprised enemy was wanting to them.

There were many signs during the remainder of June that even for defence the Germans were not invulnerable. The Americans had a success near Montdidier; there were several remarkable little successes in the Lys salient by English, Scottish, and Australian troops. But the most pointed evidence that the time was approaching when the German forces, suffering from the exhaustion due to their great effort, would be susceptible, perhaps mortally susceptible, to attack was furnished in in the salients which they had forced in the French lines. The first of these was on the line of the small stream running through St. Pierre Aigle, Dommièrs, Coeuvres, Laversine, and Ambleny to the Aisne, and forming a line which, if forced by the Germans, would enable them to outflank the Forest of Retz to the south of it, but if, on the other hand, forced by the French in a contrary direction, would imperil the upper right flank of von Boehn's army. The stream runs through a ravine, and on 29th June the French, delivering a surprise attack on a front of 5 miles, crossed the ravine, and established themselves on the eastern, and better, side of the stream along its mid-portion, thus creating a position in which, unless the victors were ejected, it would be impossible for the Germans to get past to the forest, and would force them to watch the new French salient very carefully for fresh developments. Farther to the south, little attacks on 1st July tested the German strength just below the Ourcq and near Château-Thierry. In the latter undertaking United States troops took part. Americans were now brigaded at a number of points with their Allies, and on 4th July—Independence Day—Americans and Australians were joined in a very smart action in the Somme area near Morlancourt; and the Tanks which aided them won at last good opinions from the Australians. Throughout the first fortnight of July the Germans, quiescent but preparing yet one more blow that might at the eleventh hour turn the scale in their favour, endured a number of little stabs from those skilful matadors the French, especially on the western side of von Hutier's salient, above the Forest of Retz, and below the Ourcq, as well as on the Montdidier-Noyon salient of von Hutier's army.

The blow which Ludendorff was preparing may be regarded as a last attempt to make good the advance of von Boehn to the Marne by breaking down one of the pivots on which the salient hung. Von Hutier's attempt on the Oise pivot had failed; it might still be possible to break through the Rheims shoulder, which, in some aspects, was analogous to the Arras and Vimy Ridge front held by the British Third Army, where Ludendorff's effort expired in the great offensive of March. French Head-quarters were well aware that Ludendorff was massing for attack here, for it was the German's

progressive handicap, as the campaign went on, that the possibilities of surprise became exhausted, and the only question Marshal Foch had to answer was whether the attack would be on a narrow front at Rheims, or whether it would spread eastwards on a vast scale. Foch was at the same time maturing his own counter-stroke, and, trusting to the correctness of his own divination that Ludendorff meant to strike very hard, withdrew the French Divisions from the Lys, and four more (replaced by British) from the Somme area. As he grew more certain of Ludendorff's mind he borrowed yet another four British divisions (15th, 34th, 51st, and 62nd) and placed them ready in the salient, two on each side.

The final distribution of the French troops (which it should be remembered were already massing for Foch's counter-stroke), was as follows:—General Mangin and the Tenth Army from the Aisne near Ambleny, through St. Pierre Aigle to the Ourcq (2 British divisions with this); General Dégoutte's army from the Ourcq to the Marne (with Americans at Château-Thierry); General de Mitry's Seventh Army along the Marne from Fossoy to Ventreuil; General de Berthelot's Fifth Army in front of the wooded Montagne-de-Rheims (with Italian troops in the line, and 2 British divisions on the Ardre River position), guarding Rheims from the west; and General Gouraud and the Fourth Army defending Rheims from the north and east. Against these were von Boehn's army, very much strengthened for attack and defence, but actually very hard to supply and manœuvre in the deep cup of the Marne salient; and 2 armies, under Generals von Einem and von Mudra, for the attack on the Rheims' northward and eastward defences. The German attack on Rheims extended as far eastwards as the Moronvilliers defences, whose capture by General Anthoine had been one of General Pétain's tactical triumphs in the unlucky year of 1917.

The German attack, which began on 15th July, suffered a rebuff comparable in some of its aspects to that sustained at Arras, though for different reasons. It failed, as that at Arras had done, in its attempt at surprise; for General Gouraud, east of Rheims, was so far cognisant of German intentions that he predicted correctly the hour of the preliminary bombardment. But it was an attack made on a very much greater scale than that of Arras, for the battle line, extending in all from Château-Thierry, west of Rheims, in a big hump round the town to Prosnes and Massiges on the east, was 50 miles in length, and some 50 German divisions were used from first to last. Gouraud's army alone had to sustain the attack of 15 divisions, with 10 in reserve. Von Hutier's attack was more distributed, and was made with all the careful organization which was characteristic of Ludendorff's method, and which the German Head-quarters had been willing to take a month to perfect. The attack, nevertheless, failed, and the true reason for it is to be found in the fact that the Allies were well prepared for it and had evolved a tactical defence to repel the German method of infiltration. The tactical method was, in brief, a defence in widely spaced depth, with a line of forward defensive posts occupied by men who were picked for their fighting ability, and for their readiness to give, or risk, their lives in order to break up the enemy formations. It may be added that the weather was in no way favourable to surprise attacks, but by its fairness exposed the German formations to the full blast of the French artillery—which, in fact, set up its counter battery fire before the German barrage began.

The Germans advancing, not in mass, but by their new method of spaces between files, in which there were a number of successive rows of men, came over and through the outpost lines of General Gouraud's position, and came quickly—so quickly that the German command was deceived as to the resistance to be met with. But the fortified outpost line was not intended to stop the attack. It was there merely to break it up, delay it, and notify its advance to the divisions in the battle line where the main French works were situated. The outpost line, as a scattered series of defensive posts, thus greatly hampered the German advance and distributed the impact of its weight, so

GENERAL LORD BYNG, G.C.B.

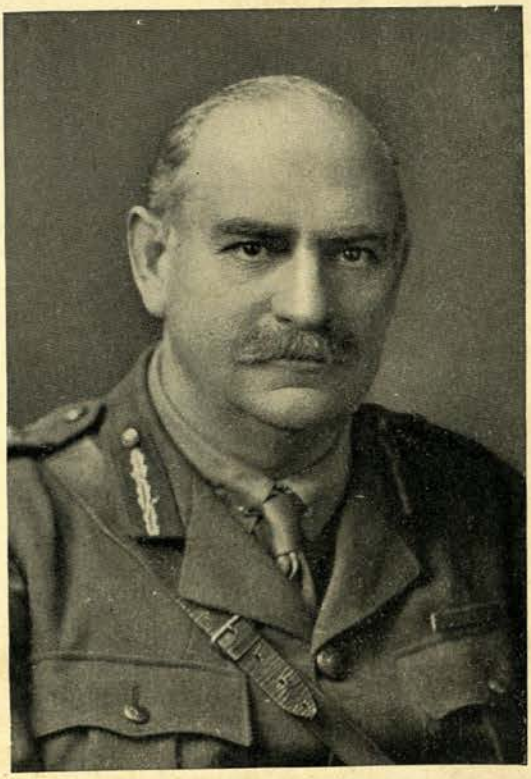
*From a photograph by Bassano*

GENERAL SIR H. S. HORNE, K.C.B.

*From a photograph by Swaine*

MAJOR-GEN. SIR A. W. CURRIE, K.C.B.

*From a photograph by Elliott & Fry*



LIEUT.-GEN. SIR JOHN MONASH, K.C.B.

*From a photograph by Elliott & Fry*

that three hours after starting it was still on the wrong side of the main French defensive positions, and had lost heavily, because the second wave of attack, coming too soon on the heels of the first, had jammed it, offering thereby a target which the French guns did not miss. So evidently was this the case that though the Germans gained a footing by very severe exertions over a section of the road which goes eastward from Rheims above Prunay and Prosnes, and below the Moronvilliers heights, the force of the attack was already spent. The Moronvilliers heights —a valuable pawn—had been ceded.

West of Rheims von Boehn had done better on the side of the sagging salient nearest to Rheims, and at the bottom of the salient where it touched the Marne. The latter was the area of greatest pressure, the Germans attacking de Mitry's army along the winding river from Fossoy to Dormans, in an attempt to cross the river. Although the woods north of the river at the two fronts named gave good cover to the German divisions marshalled for the purpose, the attempt to cross the river was a magnificent piece of organization, when the French readiness to rebut it is taken into consideration. Though bridges thrown over were destroyed by artillery or bombed by the French aviators, and though well-directed counter-attacks (especially one near Château-Thierry) deprived the Germans of a footing at several points where they had won it at the cost of great courage and sacrifice, yet near Dormans they did get over, and stayed there fighting at the end of the day in the villages near the southern river bank. Near Château-Thierry, the Americans threw back the detachments that had crossed to the river edge, and held them there.

The other point of pressure was in front of the Montagne-de-Rheims, the weight of the blow falling between Bouilly and Chatillon. Here some Italian units were fighting with the French, and they fought extremely well. No great impression was made here: the chief German gain was the territory on the south side of the Marne, and the break across the river was not wide enough to be very threatening to the French, while on the other hand it deepened the German salient in an awkward manner for them, because a river 80 yards wide, exposed to French bombing, cut off the head of the wedge from its body. The Germans made very desperate attempts during the night to improve their holding south of the Marne, but succeeded only in driving the French into the protective woods and on to high ground. The deficiency of the gain was manifested next day (16th July) when the French here regained some ground, and by their resistance made it evident that the limits of the German success here had been very nearly approached. On the same day Gouraud's battle positions on the other side of Rheims disclosed a still more patent invulnerability, and threw back all the attempts made to pierce them, or even to reach them between the Vesle and the Suippe.

Another attack was made hereabouts on the following night. The net result by the morning of 17th July was that the Germans had broadened their bridgehead on the south of the Marne, so that it ran in a flat but irregular arc from Fossoy to Montvoisin, about 16 miles reckoned by river length. But this bridgehead was not nearly so valuable as it appeared in the map, because every attempt to enlarge it met with fierce resistance, and while Château-Thierry and the eastern bend of the salient, where Berthelot's army was, still held, the Germans found it very awkward to supply or reinforce their troops. Nothing but their machine-like organization kept them there: and all the time there were unbeaten armies on their flanks. They made, on 17th July, a last attempt to beat one of these armies, namely that of General Berthelot, by an attack on a 6-mile front in the direction of the Montagne-de-Rheims. It was a well-planned and fierce attack, which carried them some distance up the valley of the Ardre, and again brought them into collision with the Italians. But the Italians—picked troops—were quite equal to the emergency, and, with the French, thrust part of the attack back into the valley of the Ardre and held the rest.

The last great German attack thus began to smoulder out in attempts to make local gains. Of all the series of offensives—the Somme, the Lys, the Montdidier-Noyon,

and the Chemin des Dames and Aisne, of which it was the continuation and consequence—it had gained the least. Unlike the others, it had been thrust forward too far and too long to be able to consolidate its own progress even in a partial way; and besides taking the risk of thrusting deep while forces left in being might attack its flanks, it had, as a last reckless gamble, added the passage of a river to its own difficulties. The only excuse for such a proceeding would have been the incapability of the enemy, in whose lines the salient had been created, to attack on either flank. It seems undoubted that Ludendorff either thought Foch would be unwilling to strike back on the flank of the salient, or that he could not strike hard enough. The remaining assumption—that Foch might never be able to strike at all because Ludendorff's last blow would keep him wholly on the defensive—was already beginning, on the 16th–17th of July, to appear doubtful. On 18th July it was to be proven wholly false.

## CHAPTER XVI

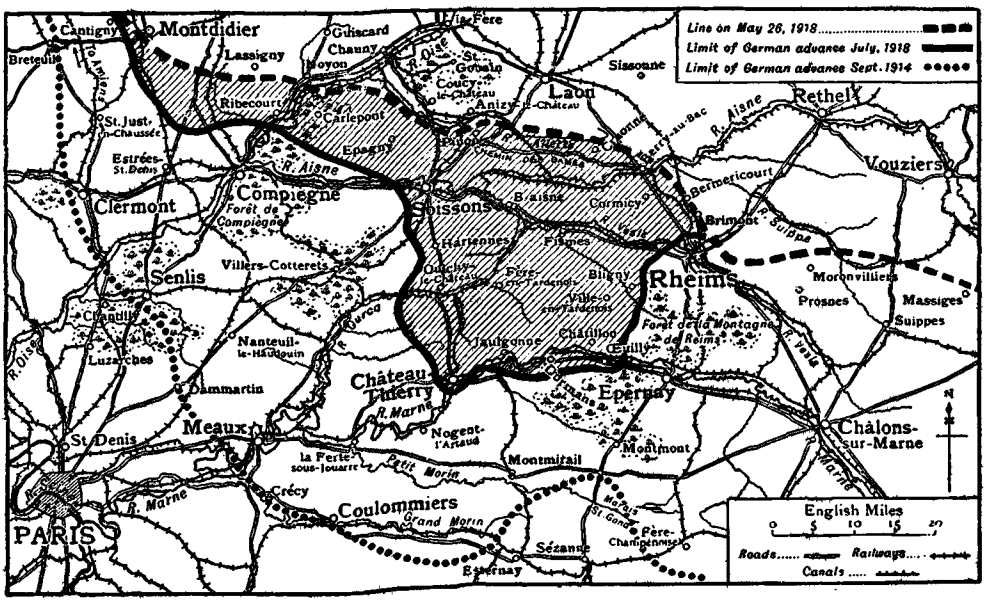
### FOCH'S CAMPAIGN OF 1918—FIRST PHASE

Marshal Foch, as Generalissimo of the Allied forces on the Western Front, had been patient, exacting, and single-idead. His guiding principle was that the moment for the counter-stroke did not arrive till the enemy had exhausted himself by his own efforts. In pursuance of this thought he had allowed the forces he commanded to sustain some perilously severe blows, the severity of which he could not precisely calculate beforehand, and the effects of which he could gauge only by faith. Such a blow was, of course, the first German great effort between Cambrai and St. Quentin, which was nearly fatal to the integrity of the Allied forces, but for the effects of which he could not be held entirely to blame, because, at its beginning, he was not in supreme command. Ludendorff, to the last, commanded the weightier and the more precisely organized machine; a machine perfected by a generation of system and of military thought, and one which could not be put out of gear till the fuel which fed it, namely the numbers and spirit of its soldiers, ran low. Foch judged that moment to have arrived in mid-July, when, his preparations having been made, he launched his counter-stroke almost at the very moment when the last German effort to knock him out, or at least to put him off his balance, was being made on the Marne and about Rheims.

An eye-witness who was near the French front in the earlier half of July has described the ceaseless stream of men and guns, seeming almost to comprise the whole of the French armies, which flowed up the roads to the forest of Villers-Cotteret. It was here that the blow was prepared and the men massed, in order to strike at the west face of the salient into which General von Boehn's advance had so recklessly plunged between the badly roaded country of the Aisne and Marne watershed. Two French armies were assembled, one commanded by General Mangin, to operate between the Aisne and the bisecting Ourcq, from Soissons to Oulchy-le-Château; and the other, by General Dégoutte, aligned from that point to Château-Thierry. Mangin's army comprised some of the finest fighting French divisions, as well as 2 of the best British ones (34th and 15th) and some of the most eager American fighters. The forest sheltered their assembly, and in front of them was a slightly undulating country, clear of obstacles, and ideal for the use of Tanks. It rises in a series of plateaux towards Soissons. South of the Ourcq, where Dégoutte's army stood, the countryside is much more intersected by streams, roads, and light railways.

The battle line of the 2 armies was some 27 miles in length; and its general configura-

tion was through Amblény, Longpont, Troesnes, Bouresches. One piece of good fortune waited on the great counter-stroke. During the night preceding the attack a July thunderstorm shook the forest, and the noise of the assembling Tanks, which were to be the surprise of the assault and to replace the heralding bombardment, was completely cloaked thereby. The troops waited through the storm of the night, which just before dawn sank to silence. It was broken, not by




The First and Last Advances on Paris: map showing approximately (by the shaded area) the limit of the German gains in the final phase of Ludendorff's offensive in 1918, and (by the dotted line) the limit reached in the 1914 advance

any artillery preparations, but by the pillar of fire which preceded the troops as a protecting barrage. Behind it the small, speedy "Whippet" Tanks went forward, with infantrymen hurrying behind their pinions.

The advance of Mangin's division was of unexampled rapidity, surpassing even that British surprise at Cambrai which was its model, and reaping a far greater advantage because of the length on which it was made, and the lesser obstacles with which it had to deal. The Germans were so completely taken by surprise that some of them were captured while cutting the rye crops behind their lines. There were of course isolated foci of resistance—at Chousy, for example, a mile north of the Ourcq, where a wood was held by German machine-gunners according to their best traditions. But the advance could afford to flow round such obstacles, leaving them to be cleared up afterwards, as they were, most effectually; and woods, fortified posts, even the Savières stream which flows sluggishly by the ponds and *marées* inset on its banks, all failed to hold up the wide and rapid onset of Mangin's army, which crossed the first German defences, and reached their artillery before it came into action, and then marched like an army in a review across the plateau. Villages fell almost as at peace manœuvres. By ten o'clock General Mangin held Fontenoy, on the north bank of the Aisne, and the plateaux of Pernaut, south of it; Vaux and the crest south of Mercin (abutting on the Montagne-de-Paris), Chaudun, Vierzy, Villers-Helon, the wood to the west of Corcy, and Faverolles. The average advance was 5 miles.

South of the Ourcq, General Dégoutte's divisions, travelling over some difficult country, had gone forward, not with the same speed, but with assured success, taking Licy,

and Torcy and Courchamps. The less speedy character of the advance is shown by the fact that the Germans counter-attacked in the afternoon at Courchamps, but were beaten off. By sundown General Dégoutte's line ran through Marizy, Hautvesnes, and Belleau, and a general advance of 2 miles had been made.

On 19th July General Mangin's movement, which had acquired too great an impetus to be stopped by improvisations, continued, holding fast to its pivot on the Aisne, and bettering its position elsewhere. Near Soissons he made secure his line from Vauxbarin to Chaudun; his centre went on past Vierzy and Villers-Helon; his right began to move towards Fère-en-Tardenois, and the whole main road from Soissons to Oulchy-le-Château was under fire from his guns. South of the Ourcq, Dégoutte's divisions found a footing on the plateau north-west of Mermes, between Dammard and Neuilly St. Front, and the heights north of Courchamps. Other French forces under de Mitry near the Marne began to push back the Germans, where they had crossed between Fossoy and Oeuilly, and so to peel the Germans away from the river west to east, leaving them no alternative but to denude themselves of the rest of their river holding as best they could. The Germans appreciated the necessity by nightfall, and von Boehn gave orders with a promptness in sharp distinction to his previous imprudence, to recross the Marne. The invaders did so on Friday night and on Saturday morning under the most harassing conditions, for though Foch's areas of greatest pressure were not at the base of the salient, but on the western side of it, and consequently the French divisions on the south of the Marne could not overrun their retreating enemy's heels, nevertheless every temporary bridge, and every road of retreat, was bombed night and day by the French aeroplane squadrons.

By Saturday night, not only was the Marne being abandoned, but the Germans had left Château-Thierry (sacking it before going), and Dégoutte's army, pivoting on it, were in Etrepilly, 3 miles north of it, on Sunday morning, and the line Bézin-Mont St. Pierre by night. At the same time the French army which General de Mitry commanded, south of the Marne, occupied the double loop of the river between Fossoy and Charteves, and thus, in its turn, secured a river pivot for subsequent movement. General Mangin, north of the Ourcq, no longer able to advance with speed, yet steadily pressing back any reinforcements sent to hinder him, drew closer to the Château-Thierry road. He no longer moved as in a procession: the Americans with him had had to fight severely for Vierzy, which had been taken, retaken, and taken again in a struggle in which a resting "shock" division (6th) of Brandenburg troops had taken part. His right wing reached Billy, on the Ourcq, on Sunday night.

General Foch had not had the men or the opportunity with which to exert a pressure on the eastern side of the Marne salient equivalent to that which Mangin and Dégoutte had applied to its western face. Otherwise the month of July might have ended the war. But when the western movement had established itself, he ordered General Berthelot to exert such pressure as he could. Part of this pressure was exerted in the valley of the Ardre, where the British 9th Corps had been operating. The 9th Corps had sustained some very hard battering, and had been in part relieved by an Italian division, which, in its turn, had stood up with commendable decision to the German attacks, and had severely handled one German division (the 123rd). General Foch sent 2 of the fresh British divisions (the 51st and 62nd), borrowed from General Haig, to relieve the Italians. The divisions arrived on the 19th with the expectation of taking part in a defensive action. On the 20th they were sent forward to attack 4 German divisions, the Italian troops opening out to let them through to the assault. The 51st, the Scottish division, found itself up against very strong machine-gun positions, but it made its way forward, almost rank to rank with the English division on its right.

Two out of the four opposing German divisions, one of which had already suffered at the hands of the Italians, were withdrawn and replaced. The British divisions took

St. Euphraise and Bouilly by Monday evening, and pressed forward, fighting for Chamuzy and Bligny, on either side of the Avre. The French on their left worked their way through the Bois de Courton and the Bois du Roi farther west.

The Germans had to date lost 21,000 prisoners and 450 guns, including the 50 which they had abandoned on the south side of the Marne. But their position, though difficult, was not desperate. They had packed more divisions into the salient than it could hold when under pressure, and they were compelled to thrust in fresh divisions lest the old ones should collapse prematurely, so that nothing but miracles of organization could preserve order in the comings and goings of the 600,000 men they had crowded between the Aisne and the Marne. Yet they did rise to the occasion; they did keep their troops supplied, and got them to fight for every foot of the retreat—which began to assume the aspect of a deflating balloon, but never became like one that had been pierced to the point of sudden collapse. The disturbing feature for the moment was that the disadvantages of their position involved them in heavy losses, while those of their attackers were, by comparison, light; the far more deadly peril lay in the fact that the rôles of attacker and attacked had been reversed, and the German High Command, with the knowledge of the failing *moral* shown in May, could not but be apprehensive of what would happen to troops when in retreat beset by a triumphant enemy.

Foch's hour had struck. He replied to an injudicious blow which Ludendorff aimed at General Gouraud, east of Rheims, by a counter-attack at an altogether new point, namely, between Montdidier and Noyon, where General Debeney's army wrested from General von Hutier the points of Mailly-Raineval and Aubvillers. It was the first note of the Foch method, which struck here and there at points where a blow should do sudden execution, but declined to press any attack beyond the point where it showed a profit, preferring to exchange it for another blow in a less resistant sector. Otherwise Foch was content to ravage the German forces in their confined deflating salient. That position had now a base of only 30 miles from Soissons to Rheims, and the distances from the midway point of this —Fismes, on the Soissons-Rheims road— was only 18 miles removed from Dégoutte's advance guard in front of Château-Thierry, and only 15 miles from Mangin's right on the Ourcq, or from de Mitry's left across the Marne. On the other side of the loop the British divisions of Berthelot's army at St. Euphraise were 12 miles from Fismes, towards which all the 4 armies were converging. The French division of Berthelot, on the British left, had got as far as Baslieux. The Germans, as their loop shortened, fought very stubbornly against this converging pressure, but they were in continual danger of finding themselves unable to resist it at particular points, and of being rolled up where they gave way.

Mangin's army was the most active between the 20th and 24th, seizing Plessier-Helleu, on the road junction to Fère-en-Tardenois, and threatening Oulchy-le-Château, while the British divisions (15th and 34th) fought their way forward at Berzy, Parcy-Tigny, and were the heroes of some very stiff fighting about the heights of Buzancy. Dégoutte's divisions had less severe opposition to overcome, since the Germans were advisedly retreating in front of him while endeavouring to keep their flanks open, and this army meanwhile got within a mile of the Oulchy-le-Château-Thierry road. De Mitry established himself firmly astride the Marne in the Mont-St.-Père-Jaulgoune loop, and Berthelot, whom the Germans were fiercely attacking, lest he should play a similar part to that of Mangin on the other side of the salient, beat off a series of counter-movements in the valley of the Ardre, but could not press in faster. Meanwhile, the Germans were pushing up a fresh army, under von Eben, to support and reinforce their compressed position; and in front of Dégoutte and de Mitry fought a series of sacrificial delaying actions, while they withdrew their guns and what they could of their supplies. They retreated slowly but inevitably, and on the 24th Dégoutte, taking Nanteuil and Bouvardes, at the foot of the large plateau below

Oulchy, began to push on through the forest of Fère towards Fère-en-Tardenois, now with its road in reach of French guns.

On 25th October, despite the strenuous resistance offered to him, Mangin, though still marking time on his left towards Soissons, took advantage of a perceptible weakening in front of his right wing to seize Oulchy-le-Château. Dégoutte's army still had to pick its way slowly through forest country infested with machine-guns; but on the Marne a Franco-American attack spread eastwards from the Jaulgonne loop towards Dormans and through the Forest of Riz. The German counter-attack was a matter of routine; but it was clear that their hold on the Marne would exist no longer than was necessary for their own safety. Their counter-attacks on Berthelot, who had been very properly resisted, with the utmost force von Boehn could command, were more serious, and the British and French had an uphill fight in every sense along the heights of the little Ardre. All the time, however, the Germans were flinging divisions into a furnace, and it was proof of this compulsion that von Below so far weakened in front of Gouraud on the other side of Rheims that the French were able to retake their foremost positions in the valley of the Suippe and towards Moronvilliers. On the 26th Gouraud retook the Main de Massiges.

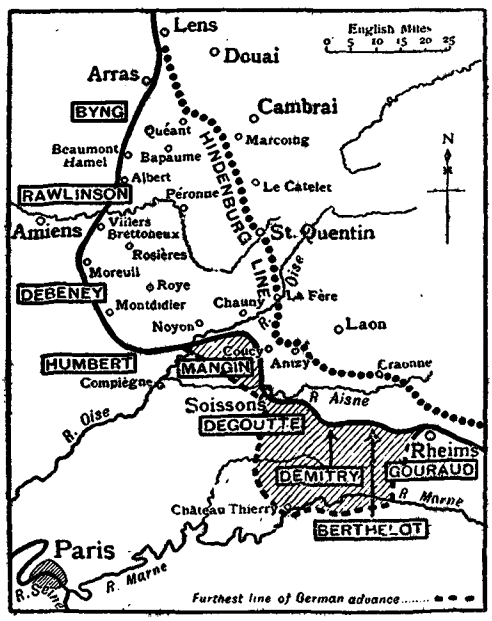
The German attempt to stop Mangin by retaking Villemontoire (25th), on the Soissons-Oulchy road (about the middle of his line, near the position of the British contingent), was a failure, and from Villemontoire to Dormans the salient was now becoming so sharp that, south-west of the Ardre, the French guns on either side of it were able to enfilade the German infantry. On the 27th, after a pause for re-arrangement, the French began to push on a front made wider by the fall of Oulchy towards Fère-en-Tardenois, and, unable to maintain their southernmost posts longer, the last Germans left the Marne, their departure accelerated by the double flank movement of the French along the river from Dormans and from Reuil. Before that significant occurrence the Allied line on the right of the salient had been advanced to Bruyères, Villeneuve, Passy, Cugny, and Chaumuzy, where the 2 British divisions with Berthelot, advancing along the Ardre, passed the hotly disputed village of Marfaux for the last time. Dégoutte's troops had at last got through the forest of Fère, and all day (Sunday 28th) the Allied advance swept convergingly forward till at night the line of the Ourcq was reached and seized. Dégoutte's advanced guard had crossed the river and got into Fère-en-Tardenois. American troops were in Nesles east of it, and 15 miles farther east Berthelot's divisions were approaching Ville-en-Tardenois. It was through this narrowing gap that von Boehn had to withdraw what he could of the remnants of the corps that had crossed the Marne.

This situation could evidently take care of itself from the point of view of Foch and Pétain, and orders were given to Mangin to swing his weight to the Soissons flank and centre, where, however, the German resistance was bound in self-defence to be most urgent. The 29th was one of the hardest fighting days of the hard bitten army of Mangin. The Scottish division captured the park and château of Buzancy, maintaining itself there in spite of the untiring efforts of the Germans to oust it, and thus threatening one of the important plateaux in the valley of the Crise. Farther south, the other British division exchanging the place of honour with the co-operating French division who had held it on the 28th, completed the capture of Rozoy and Cugny, and conquered the Butte de Chaulmont. With that plateau went the last strong German bastion on the west of the Ourcq line, which rapidly became untenable, because the French and American gunners were able to use the Butte as an ideal gun-platform to rake all the valleys radiating north and north-east, and the French and American divisions under Dégoutte were now able to emerge from the woods and swarm over open country. The Americans had cause to remember the valley of the Ourcq, for Sergy was won and lost three times before they added it to their colours, and their capture of Seringes was an affair of take and lose, and take again, fully as desperate.

The German front had now lost nearly all

its convexity. On 1st August Mangin's army took Cramoiselle and Cramaille and further prejudiced the German retreat, while the opposite side of the salient was becoming difficult and dangerous in the neighbourhood of Ville-en-Tardenois, the eastern jamb of the gates through which the retreat was pressing northwards. Rossigny was cleared of the German garrison, as well as the Meunière wood, and Ville-en-Tardenois threatened with envelopment. On 1st and 2nd August Mangin put the finishing touches to his share of the drive. His northern wing pressed over the Soissons-Château-Thierry road, giving an appearance of premeditated attack on a large scale, while his right wing wheeled forward on a 14-mile front, extending from Hartennes to Coulanges. The English division placed near the base of the wheeling movement took Tigny, and the Scottish on its right fought its way forward east of Beugneux. On 2nd August the feint of the northern wing became a reality, and on this front Mangin delivered his *coup-de-grâce*. The left wing swept suddenly across the valley of the Crise, after picking its way into it, and the right wing climbed on to the southern half of the great low plateau between the Ourcq and the Vesle.

Generals Dégoutte and Berthelot conformed to the tightening loop of Mangin's cordon, and stretched it till the French advance from the south and south-east was level with an east by north line running through Oulchy-le-Château. Hartennes, the scene of the last German stand on the Soissons-Oulchy road, had been captured in the movement of 1st August—a fine piece of work in which the British divisions had a share, and this capture had left Mangin's left wing free for a direct attack on Soissons. General Villemont's brigade of dismounted cavalry, breaking through the German outposts, fell on the main body at Mercin, 2 miles west of the city. The Germans, well supported by their guns, stood their ground steadfastly at first, but the locality had no longer primary strategical importance, for Soissons could not now be regarded as a pivot. The Germans, nevertheless, fought less stubbornly than they might have done, and withdrew from Mercin, fighting a rear-guard action while their main body evacuated Soissons. General Mangin removed his head-quarters there on the evening of 2nd August. The occurrence signalized the complete abandonment not merely of the German advance to the Marne, but of the German offensive. Ludendorff had withdrawn his forces to the line of the Vesle, having suffered losses amounting to 30,000 men and 500 guns. He had lost time and




Map showing the Relative Positions of the British and French Armies after the Germans had been driven across the Marne back to the Vesle

had lost the initiative, which henceforth remained in the hands of the Allied Commander-in-Chief.

General Foch had endured at least one disappointment, but the success of his first *riposte* must have confirmed his confidence that his German adversary stood now in the condition when he would be most vulnerable to attack; and attack was the main-spring of Foch's policy. Lord Haig has recorded that the French Commander-in-Chief asked the generals commanding the British, French, and American armies to prepare separate plans for local offensives, each to be taken in hand as soon as possible with certain

definite objectives of a limited nature. In other words, every one of the armies under the single command was to be kept in a state of preparedness to go forward at a few hours' notice, so that Foch could sound the advance at any point of his battle line with the greatest celerity, and reap thereby all the advantage of surprise. When the " limited objective " was attained the army effecting it would cease its movement, and another chord would be struck by other forces at another point on the keyboard. Ludendorff would in consequence be compelled to disperse his strategical reserves over the whole front, or run the risk that one of the " limited objectives " should be converted into a break through.

The whole strategic manœuvre was compounded of smaller ones, each of which consisted of driving back one German army, or army group, by the pressure exerted against its neighbours. When this army had been pushed out of alignment the salient left by its withdrawal was used to outflank one or other of the neighbouring armies in turn. The proper strategic reply to this system of alternating pressures would have been the withdrawal of the German line as a whole to the Meuse, a feat which Ludendorff's organization might have accomplished, but which his position in the eyes of the German people would not have survived. He did in fact attempt this dangerous and delicate operation; but his nerve failed him, and he laid the blame for its ultimate abandonment on the failure of the German people to support him. But it is more than open to doubt whether he could have carried his armies even to the line of the Meuse, which would have been their strategic goal, with success. For Foch skilfully drew Ludendorff's reserves, by the way in which he placed his blows, continually farther from the German frontier. His first stroke freed the Paris-Nancy railway, and improved the French communications: his second stroke (which will be the next to be considered in detail) was entrusted to the British Commander-in-Chief, who set in motion the Third and Fourth British Armies, and the First and Third French Armies, in the salient which had been created by the Germans in March, and which, now that its purpose was void, was a danger to them, instead of an advantage.

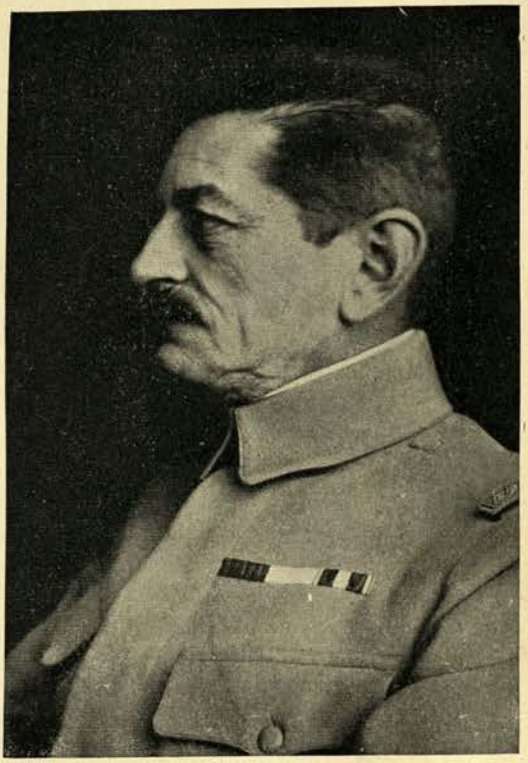
## CHAPTER XVII

### FOCH'S CAMPAIGN OF 1918—BRITAIN'S RETURN TO THE OFFENSIVE

A distinct task was assigned to General Haig. The capture of Soissons marked a pause in the movement of General Mangin: but the German retreat from the Marne was not yet ended, and it had reactions elsewhere. The backward momentum of the Germans, the forward momentum of the French, left a situation which balanced for a time uncertainly on the line of the Vesle river, uncertainly because Fismes had been captured by the Americans, after a smart action, and the French had elsewhere secured bridge-heads, not only where de Mitry and Dégoutte were acting, but on the other side of Rheims, where Gouraud was on the watch. The repercussion of the German retreat was also felt in the greater salient to the north, where, on 4th August, a backward movement began on a 12-mile sector from the British front in the Ancre valley, on both sides of Albert, and from the French front behind the Avre, between Montdidier and Moreuil. These were German insurances against offensives from these points. The first of them was a testimony to the value of the continual activity which the British troops had displayed in pushing the Germans back from their advanced positions in front of Amiens, and had culminated in a brisk and successful attack south of Morlancourt on 29th July. The second was a similar tribute to the

GENERAL VON LUDENDORFF

*From an engraving*



GENERAL MANGIN

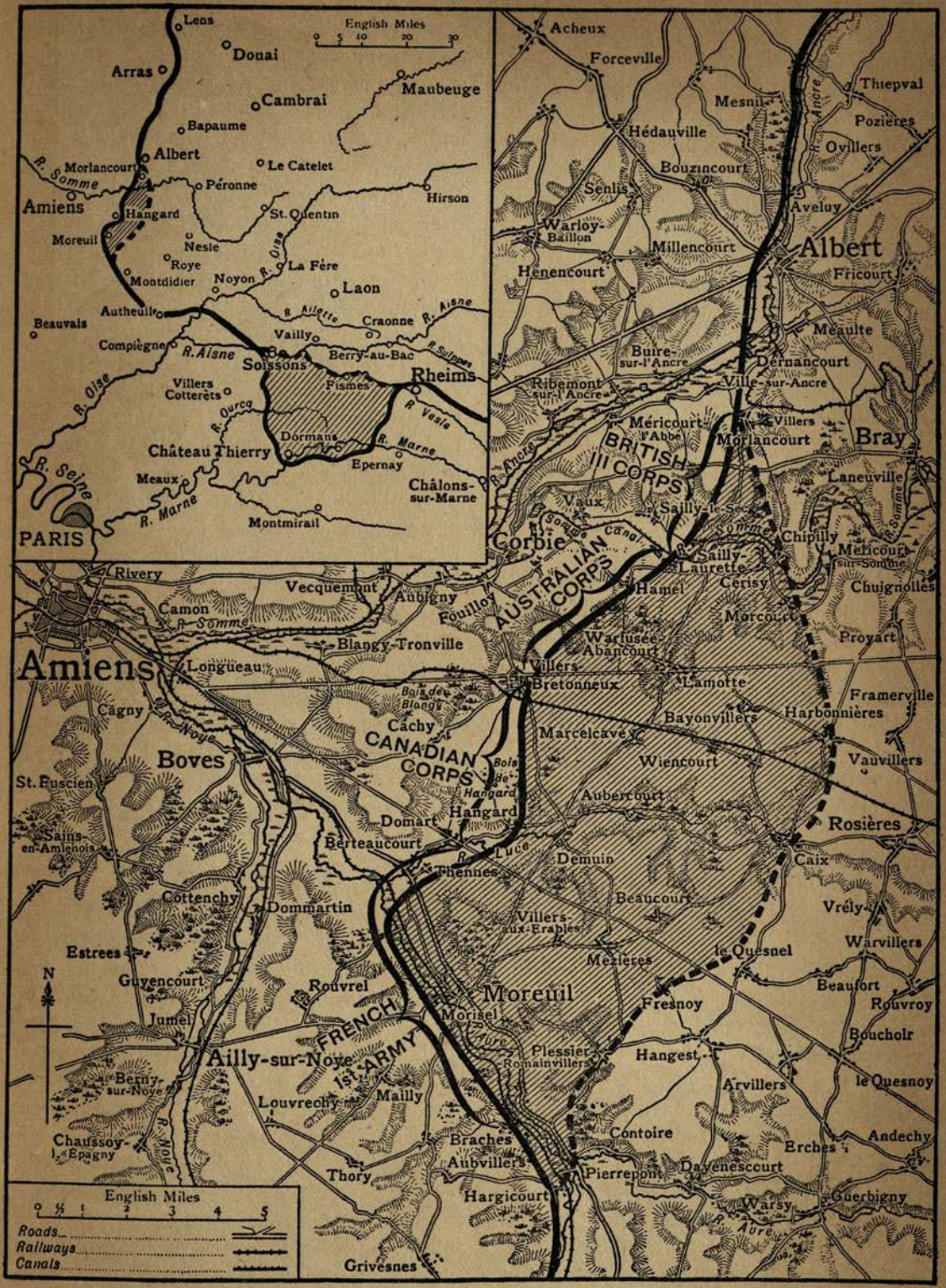
*From a photograph*

MARSHAL VON HINDENBURG

*From a photograph*

GENERAL HUMBERT

*From a French Official Photograph*




The Freeing of Amiens: map illustrating the recapture of the city's outer defence line on the opening day of the Battle of Amiens, August 8, 1918

French attack on 23rd July which captured Mailly, Raineval, Souvillers, and Aubvillers, and left General Debeney in command of the Souvillers plateau.

The time was now ripe for the continuation of Foch's offensive; and, in general, two areas offered an opportunity for it. The first was in the great salient where the foregoing operations had taken place; the second was on the Lys district, where there had been considerable activity, and where Sir Douglas Haig believed that a counter-movement would achieve an assured success. It is probable that Ludendorff, at this juncture, wrongly estimated the psychology of the Allied command. The British Commander, by tradition and custom, leaned to the plan of an attack in an area where, since 1914, the British effort both in defence and offence had been concentrated, namely Ypres to Menin. The French Commander-in-Chief believed that the continuation of pressure against the German centre would be productive of greater results, and would enable the blow on the northern flank to be struck later with greater effect; and to this view he converted Sir Douglas Haig. But colour was lent to the surmise that the Ypres area might be chosen for an offensive by the show of preparation which was still continued there even after the decision to strike elsewhere had been reached. For example Canadian battalions were put in line on the Mont Kemmel front, where they could easily be identified; corps head-quarters were prepared; spurious training operations and a concentration of Tanks were laid bare to the enemy's aeroplanes: and the rumour of a projected attack was industriously spread. As a fact, the Canadians who were supposed to be in the Kemmel area were swiftly transferred, as the moment for action approached, to Sir Henry Rawlinson's Fourth Army command on the Somme. Sir Henry Rawlinson's preparations had been in progress since mid-July; and at the end of the month the First French Army, under General Debeney, on Rawlinson's right, was placed under Sir Douglas Haig's direction.

On the left flank of the front chosen for the attack of 8th August stood the British 3rd Corps (General Sir R. H. K. Butler), with the Australian corps (General Sir J. Monash)[1] in the centre, and the Canadian corps (General Sir A. W. Currie) on the right. The front of the British attack extended for 11 miles from Morlancourt to the Amiens-Roye road: Debeney's army which was timed to start its attack an hour later than the British, extended the front by some 5 miles to Moreuil. It was afterwards to extend its operations towards Biaches. As in the German attack nearly five months before heavy fog obscured the moving battle-field, and aided the effect of surprise for which the Allied command had hoped and prepared. The Germans had, in part, relied on heavy formations: the British used their new weapons, the Tanks, of which no fewer than 400 heavy and light were sent into action after the extremely brief but heavy bombardment at dawn. The proof of the completeness of the surprise is furnished by the remarkable rapidity with which the greater part of the advance reached and passed the points assigned to it. The 3rd Corps on the left, which had been engaged with the enemy for two days before the general advance, encountered the stiffest resistance, for here the Germans were prepared to resist. The most that was hoped for the action in this sector was that Butler's corps might secure the loop of the river, north of Morcourt, and thus act as a pivot to protect the flank of the Australian corps, south of the Somme, as it swung forward. Butler's corps held the Germans in the loop, and were still fighting for Chipilly when the day ended. But on their right the Australians and Canadians went through the German defences like paper, Tanks being followed by infantry, and infantry by cavalry. An advance of between 6 and 7 miles was made and the whole of the old outer defence line of Amiens was recaptured, with the villages of Caix, Harbonnieres, and Morcourt.

The advance was continued far into the night, and Le Quesnel was added to the points won. The captures included 13,000 prisoners and between 300 and 400 guns, while the ground was strewn with the debris

[1] General Birdwood had been promoted to the command of the Fifth Army.

of a retreating German army. Debeney's success had been commensurate, and had secured an almost equal advantage of surprise and captures, having regard to the length of front, some 5 miles, on which he was operating. Opposite Rawlinson had been 9 German divisions of the Second German Army under General von Marwitz. Debeney had faced von Hutier's Eighteenth German Army, which made a poor resistance, except at Morisel and Moreuil. When these were gone the Germans lost heart, and the French progress became so rapid that they reached Fresnoy and Plessiers, and linked up with General Humbert on the road to Roye, while farther south the Avre was again passed at Pierrepont. They took 3400 prisoners: so that the captures of the day amounted in all to some 17,000 men and 500 guns, together with an amount of ammunition and stores which compared with that taken in the Marne advance.

This victory and its extent were truly remarkable in an area where, some months before, the British position had seemed desperate. In these intervening months the British armies had been reinforced by some 300,000 men (who had been up till March reserved in England, instead of being put into training in France),[1] and their losses of guns had been more than made good. But that the new drafts should have been able to take their place in victorious armies would seem a miracle, except on the supposition that the old cadres were superlatively good, or that some deterioration had taken place in the German armies meanwhile. Both suppositions are true. General Ludendorff, in his *Memories*, has complained bitterly of the conduct of his German divisions on 8th August.

"Six or seven German divisions, which had previously been regarded as excellent, were completely shattered. I heard of acts of glorious bravery, but also of incidents which, if I tell the truth, I should never have thought could have happened in the German army. Our men surrendered to isolated cavalrymen, and small sections of Tanks. A division of fresh troops, gallantly entering the battle, was greeted by the retreating troops with cries of 'Strike-breakers!' and 'Prolongers of the War!'"[2]

Rawlinson had been held north of the Somme, but on 9th August his attack was continued, and despite an opposition that was long in weakening, Chipilly was won by the evening, and the 3rd Corps was in possession of Morlancourt and the high ground that ran back from it parallel to the Somme. On the south of the river the cavalry seized its long-withheld opportunity: the 1st Cavalry Division (General Mullens), took Meharicourt, the 2nd (General Pitman), and 3rd (General Harmon), harried a retreating enemy. By nightfall the new line ran through Bouchoir, Rouvroy, Maucourt, and reached the western edge of Lihons and Proyart. Debeney's army, by a rapid advance, gained the line Orvillers, Hangest, Pierrepont, on the Avre; and the combined armies were now in a position to strike at the important German railway junction of Chaulnes. On the 10th General Humbert's Third French Army prolonged the French attacking line. Debeney's First Army, already in touch with Humbert in the previous night, had taken Faverolles, and Assainvilliers, and this made Montdidier untenable by the Germans; but though they had hurriedly retreated here they seemed to have been once more taken by surprise by the new attack of Humbert. This was directed against them on a 10-mile front from Rollot to Elincourt; and in quick succession the villages marking the German line were taken, and another German retreat had been forced upon them for a depth of 5 miles, leaving Humbert's division in possession of the Thiescourt hills, and well on the way to Roye.

On Humbert's left the First French Army, reducing the foci of resistance at a number of points, aligned itself from Fresnoy-les Roye (which was in rifle-shot of the railway line from Chaulnes to Roye), through Fescamps and behind Conchy, and so came into complete co-ordination with its neighbour's movements. The Germans had now brought up from Cambrai a number of

[1] They were largely older men, and were not first-class fighting troops. Their bayonet strength was much below these figures. It should be added that British Headquarters had early in 1918 considered and provided for the possible necessity of evacuating the Channel Ports and flooding the north-western area of France.

[2] *My Memories*, by General Ludendorff. (Hutchinson, 1919.)

fresh divisions which, "strike-breakers" though their comrades might call them, were energetic enough in resisting the advance of Rawlinson's centre towards Lihons and Chaulnes. The Australians were the first to come into conflict with them, and the fighting was severe till the Canadians, advancing with Tanks on the Australian right, took off some of the pressure, and a reinforcement of artillery subdued the German fire. The Australians gained a footing on the ridge west of Lihons, and beat off a strong German attack. Proyart, north of Lihons, and Meharicourt, south of it, were captured, and from these, as at Lihons, the German counter-attack could not evict the holders, so that by the 11th Lihons was definitely lost to von Marwitz, though he still clung to Roye. The British position on the north of the Somme was improved, and though the bridge at Braye was gone, Rawlinson held the crossing, while the French-British line south of the Somme now threatened the German nodal points at Chaulnes, Roye, and Lassigny. Here the action after three days of triumphant advance was temporarily stayed. The derelict battle area in front of Rawlinson and Debeney was scarred with the old defences, with shell-holes, wire, and broken roads, and it offered opportunities for stubborn defence, which the heavily reinforced enemy were evidently prepared to make, judging by the number of counter-attacks they sent forward, especially about Lihons.

Debeney's and Humbert's line was better able to push forward than that of Rawlinson, partly because the Germans were less strongly reinforced in front of them, and partly because the country was more suited to the skilful French tactics of small envelopments. Making continuous progress on 13th, 14th, 15th August the French established themselves at Tilloloy, Ecouvillon, Canny-sur-Matz and Ribecourt—so that Noyon, on the Oise, became, like Roye and Chaulnes, another point which would certainly be reft from the Germans. The advance in a week had relieved Amiens from all danger, and had converted a German threat on the Allies' communications into an actual and growing interference with the Germans' railway feeders. Sir Douglas Haig at this point broke off the action so far as Rawlinson and the British Fourth Army were concerned: but Debeney's First Army, reverting to the French group commander, joined with Humbert in steadily eating into the German positions on the south of the salient between the Somme and the Oise.

While Sir Douglas Haig, therefore, proceeded with his preparations for an attack north of the Somme, where its impact did not seem to be anticipated by Ludendorff, and where a forward movement would facilitate the operations of his Fourth Army, should it be held desirable to renew them, the French First Army resumed its methodical siege operations towards Roye. In these they were helped by the Canadians of Rawlinson's Army, who advanced through Fronsart and Damery, beating off counter-attacks, towards Fresnoy-le-Roye, while the French invested Goyencourt. Humbert's Third French Army carried in succession Fresnieres-le-Hamel (19th August), and Pimprez on the Oise (5 miles from Noyon), Beauvraignes (20th August), and Lassigny (21st August). On Humbert's right Mangin's army had also begun to move forward its left wing and centre (pivoting on Fontenoy, west of Soissons) so as to make ground between the Oise, Ailette, and the Aisne, with the view of ultimately advancing once more to the Forest of St. Gobain.

Ludendorff had by this time become entirely aware that he had expended the resources that would make a successful offensive possible, and that he must husband his reserves in order to weather the storm that was breaking on him. The Allies were gaining in numbers with every fresh accession of American troops: and it was only too clear that his strategic adversary, Foch, was ready to pursue his policy of throwing in every man and every gun into what was left of the campaign of 1918. In Germany the pretence was still maintained that the retirement was strategic—in order to hit back the harder—but retirement was indubitably taking place, and it was manifest not only on the fronts where it was made under compulsion, but on others where the salients

MARSHAL FOCH

*From a photograph by Demay*

created by abortive advances rendered flank attacks on the part of the Allies possible. Thus, on the Lys, the British artillery, continuously augmented, rendered the maintenance of the German advanced positions an obligation to be paid for in a constant drain on the front-line infantry, and on the troops in the exposed and imperfect communications. They had no object in remaining, and General Sixt von Armin began as early as 5th August to effect local withdrawals. On 13th and 14th August British patrols pushed forward here south and east of Vieux Berquin, north of Merville. On the 18th yet another advance was made on a 4-mile front from Vieux Berquin to Bailleul, and was continued on the 19th.

A withdrawal of a yet more premonitory kind took place on the German salient on the Ancre, where General von Below (Seventeenth German Army) began to grow uneasy at the prospect of sustaining a blow while awkwardly placed, and withdrew his forces on the Bapaume front from Serre, Beaumont Hamel, Puisieux, and Bucquoy, towards the shelter of the segment of the Hindenburg line behind him. This withdrawal took place on 13th, 14th August, and went still farther back on 15th August.

These signs that the Germans were no longer unaware of the British Commander's intentions did not discourage him from an attempt which was strategically desirable, because it would turn the enemy line at Péronne and lead the way to the Cambrai-St. Quentin barrier, and was now facilitated tactically by his new position on the Bucquoy plateau south of Arras, and the possibility of making use of the Tanks in a region not yet ruined by shell-fire. The Battle of Bapaume was designed in two stages; the first of which was intended to secure a platform from which the British Third Army (General Byng) could be aligned with the left wing of the Fourth Army in preparation for an assault by the two in combination. The battle which followed was according to plan. Yet another misty morning ushered in the attack of the 4th Corps (General Harper), and 5th Corps (General Haldane), of the Third Army on 21st August. The assault, maintained over a front extending from Beaucourt-sur-Ancre to Moyenville, was delivered in two pulses, 5 divisions (New Zealand, Guards, 2nd, 37th, 42nd), preceded by a number of Tanks, rushing the front line of the German defences, and 3 other divisions (3rd, 5th, and 63rd) passing through them to continue the advance. Except for the asset which the British possessed in Tanks, the attack was not unlike that of the German model. Like that it drew advantage from the mist to pour in a heavy fire from guns and trench mortars brought close up, to which the enemy artillery could reply only uncertainly because, while the British artillery had its targets ranged, the German gunners could not know precisely where the attacking infantry waves were. Even their machine-guns were not very effective, and the net result of this limited attack was that the British troops reached the line of the Arras-Albert railway on a front of nearly 9 miles, taking (not without some fierce resistance) Achiet-le-Petit on the railway, Courcelles, and Moyenville. The Germans were also pushed from the north bank of the Ancre at Beaucourt. Some 2000 prisoners were made.

There was no preliminary bombardment: and the advance realized a depth between 2 and 3 miles. Early the next morning, after a moonlit night in which a great deal of bombing of the enemy's communications was accomplished, the 3rd Corps (47th, 18th, 12th, and 3rd Australian Divisions) of the Fourth Army undertook another limited advance with the object of bringing up its left level with the Third Army's right. One division (18th), forced the Ancre and enveloped Albert, and the general line was advanced to the east of the road leading from Albert to Braye, on the Somme, while south of the river the divisions were now able to advance in conformity. The Fourth Army's "limited objective" was not expected by von Below, who, in anticipation of a renewed and immediate advance of the Third Army in the Miraumont sector, had hurried reserves there to counter-attack. These attacks, very fierce on the railway line and east of it at Achiet-le-Grand, and between Miraumont and Puisieux, did not shake the Third Army from its newly-won positions,

and the divisions were ready to begin the combined operations the next day. These were undertaken on a long front from Mercatel (near to the junction of the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line with the main Hindenburg line), to the British junction with the French near Lihons. The procedure which had served so well on the preceding day was again followed—no preliminary bombardment; the use of Tanks wherever they could operate; a heavy barrage in front of Tanks and infantry.

The same success followed the procedure, and it is a fact that though at many points the Germans fought very stubbornly—near Albert, and Hamel, north of the Somme, and Chuignolles and Chigues, south of it—and their machine-gun posts could only be beaten down by Tanks, and sometimes not even by them, yet as a whole they fought patchily, and towards the end of the day, ran. North of the Ancre and of Albert the attack (which was opened at different hours and intervals) of the 6th Corps began at 4 o'clock in the morning, took Gomiecourt, and thereafter spreading northwards to where the 4th Corps held the extreme left, the northern divisions swept round to go through the first-line German defences, and to pick up in quick succession Bihucourt, Evivellers, Boyelles, and Boisy Becquerelle, the fortified villages behind it. This cut the main road to Bapaume from Arras, and foreshadowed the movement which was to enclose the former town, while at the same time the historic Thiepval Ridge was outflanked. It was destined to fall next day, almost without further cost to the Third Army. The contrast to the cost of its capture in the first Battle of the Somme (1916) was striking. But it was also typical of the evident demoralization which on this day in 1918 had seized the Germans, who in this area of the Third Army's attack lost 5000 prisoners. This was the principal locality of the Third Army's advance, though other attacks were made during the day all along the front north of Albert.

South of the Somme the attack began nearly an hour later. Two divisions (Australian 1st and 32nd) captured Herleulle, Chuignolles, and Chigues after severe fighting, in which the German casualties were by no means comprised by the 2000 prisoners they lost, and the 18th Division and part of the 38th (Welsh) Division captured the high ground east of Albert—again by hard fighting. The 38th Division's task included that of wading the Ancre. In surveying the first day's action on the extended front it must be kept in mind that throughout its length pressure was kept up by thrusts or the threats of thrusts, and that while the Germans were successful in parrying some of them, others got past their guard and inflicted the damage which has been recorded. That the damage had set up demoralization in some areas was made clear next day, when, from the Somme northwards to Neuville St. Vaast the pressure was again applied. The rear-guard garrisons no longer held out with their traditional tenacity; and German reserves were hurried up without any clear apprehension beyond that of filling the gap of the moment. Thiepval, threatened on the 23rd, was abandoned with a mere semblance of resistance to a cleverly-designed concentric attack, in which the 38th (Welsh) Division which, as already mentioned, had waded the Ancre to obtain position, played a prominent part. The cheap purchase of Thiepval would in any case have contrasted strangely with the previous history of its defence: but the testimony which it afforded to the changed quality of the German resistance was emphasized by the flight of the Germans before the divisions of the 5th Corps from all the high ground in its neighbourhood from Ovillers to Mametz Wood. The 38th Division of this corps occupied Pozières, Courcelette, and Martinpuich in quick succession.

The whole German front south of Bapaume was giving and falling back towards the Bapaume-Péronne road. Next in section northwards, Miraumont collapsed after its three days' resistance, and Pys fell to the same (42nd) Division. The 5th Division cleared Irles, and went side by side with New Zealanders to Loupart Wood. The "limited objective" was on this day becoming an elastic term, for the New Zealanders pressed forward with the 37th Division to the outskirts of Bapaume. Farther north still the

Germans made a much more characteristic effort to hold the Third Army on the important pivot of their left wing, where the slopes above Bapaume were the outposts of the Drocourt-Quéant switch line. The high ground between Mory and Sapignies was fought for step by step; but there and above them it was the British step that advanced, and von Below's reinforcements were unable to keep St. Leger, Henin-sur-Cojeul, or St. Martin-sur-Cojeul. The Guards, the 52nd, and 56th Divisions, took these places on the 24th, and were prepared to renew the struggle on the following days. It was not, however, till the 27th that Sapignies and Mory were firmly in British hands, and the way cleared for the northward encirclement of Bapaume. On that day also the New Zealanders took the Butte de Warlencourt, south of the town. Trônes Wood followed it after a bitter struggle; and the fate of Bapaume was not sealed till the 29th, when the fall of Beugatre to the north, following on that of Delville Wood to the south, so far encircled it as to leave the Germans no option but to make the best of their way out of it by the road from Bapaume to Cambrai.

The German resistance here had been more determined and the British attacks more persistent, not because Bapaume was at stake, but because, north of it, the impetus of attack was bringing the Third Army up to the greater fortified lines of the German defences. South of the Somme there was a much larger mileage for the British to cover before the lines were reached, and the actions fought were not so crucial. But Bray-sur-Somme was captured by Australians of Rawlinson's army: there was hard fighting at La Boiselle, and thenceforward the advance began to accelerate on both sides of the Somme towards Péronne. With the fall of Combles (to the 18th Division) the road from Bapaume to Péronne was almost reached. Bapaume fell to the New Zealanders on 29th August, but a more important strategical gain was that of Croisilles on the Sensée river, and within striking distance of the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line on the same day.

On the last day but one of August the line of the Third and Fourth British Armies ran from the outskirts of Heudecourt, Bullecourt, Écoust, and outwards to Vraucourt, Fremiecourt, Bancourt and Combles to Cléry, in the last loop of the river west of Péronne. Any farther advance of the Fourth Army on the Somme would make the German positions south of the river precarious, and this tactical advantage was acknowledged by a German withdrawal both from the British and the French fronts between the Somme and the Oise. The operations of the French armies under Generals Debeney and Humbert are to be considered subsequently: it need only be chronicled at this point that Noyon fell to the French on the same day that the New Zealanders occupied Bapaume. Péronne was quickly to follow, and its swift capture set the seal of brilliance on the established reputation of the Australian shock troops.

It would have been distinctly advantageous to the German plan to have kept Péronne as long as possible, as an obstacle in the combined forward movement of the Allied armies towards the Hindenburg line, and a deliberate encirclement, though foreshadowed, would have given them several days in which to withdraw their heaped-up munitions and supplies in the neighbourhood. The defensive feature of Péronne was Mont St. Quentin, which commands the Somme crossings. To its nest of machine-guns the floods had added another obstacle, so that no crossing in front of it was practicable. The 35th Brigade of the Australian 2nd Division (General Rosenthal) answered the difficult question put to it by a night crossing, on improvised bridges, 2 miles farther west at Feuillères. The Australians cleared out the German trenches in front of Cléry, and occupied them in order to launch their own attack on the German positions, not from the south, but from the north-west. The surprise of the manœuvre, added to its daring, reaped its reward, and Mont St. Quentin was taken by assault, not without heroism added to ingenuity, and losses added to both; but its quick reduction saved days of fighting and thousands of casualties. Péronne was added to the Australian colours in consequence: and fell on 1st September.

This was a feat of individual merit which from its circumstances must be singled out: but the no less remarkable fact was the incessant energy with which the Fourth and Third Armies continued to attack. On the eve and day of the attack on Péronne 4 divisions on the Fourth Army's left wing (3rd Australian, 58th, 18th, and 47th) took Bouchasvesnes, Bancourt, and Fregicourt, and the Third Army retook all those positions which in the first battle of the Somme had taxed the diminishing energies both of Haig's and Pétain's commands, namely Sailly-Saillisel and its heights, as well as Morval, Beaulencourt and Riencourt.

This placed them on the ridges east of Bancourt, Fremicourt, Vaulx, and Longatte. Yet farther north a most significant salient had been established on another old battlefield, Bullecourt and Heudecourt, and following them Riencourt and Cagnicourt were captured by the 17th Corps (General Fergusson) and there the first crevice was opened on the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line. One might venture to vary the metaphor by saying that this was the first nail driven into the coffin of the Hindenburg line. Sir Douglas Haig, in recording it, treats it as the last act in the Battle of Bapaume, in which 23 divisions of 2 British armies had driven 35 German divisions from one side of the old Somme battlefield to the other, capturing 34,000 men and 270 guns in the operations, and establishing a moral ascendancy over the enemy never to be lost. The shock of Haig's victories, displaying such a lightning-like recovery from the confusion into which Ludendorff imagined that he had plunged the British armies, was felt not alone by the German soldiery, but by German Head-quarters. As early as 14th August a conference had been held at German Head-quarters, at which the Chancellor and the Kaiser were present, and at which Ludendorff urged that Germany should come to terms, for her situation could never be improved for the better. It might become worse; but the Allies, faced with the prospect of driving the German armies from their fortified lines, might yet be inclined to come to terms. It was only the prospect of so suddenly acquainting Germany with the news that a "German Peace" was a chimera, which prevented this plan from being adopted. Ludendorff had, therefore, to fall back on an economical defensive policy, and his method of attempting economy was to withdraw slowly to the Hindenburg line. The method failed because Haig divined the German plan, and by striking towards the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line upset it.

The crevice in the Drocourt-Quéant line has been spoken of as a new turning point. So it proved. The Germans still held as outposts to their main fortified defence lines the high ground about Rocquigny and Beugny, as well as the defensible line of the Tortille River. But while the Battle of Bapaume was still in progress Haig had been re-transferring the Canadian Corps from the Amiens battlefield back to its old front of Arras. On 26th August the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions with the fighting 51st (Scottish) had attacked east of Arras, and captured Monchy-le-Preux. The British First Army, commanded by General Horne, followed up this preliminary spear-thrust by the decisive action that drove the Germans back clear through the network of defences which, perfected by eighteen months' hard work, linked up with the Hindenburg line at Quéant. The advance began on the morning of 2nd September, with an assault in which 6 attacking divisions formed its spearhead (1st and 4th Canadians, 4th, 52nd, 57th, and 63rd British).

The attack on the 26th had been made on either side of the Scarpe, the Canadians taking Monchy and Guemappe; the 51st reaching the outskirts of Roeux, and storming Greenland Hill. The success did not end there, for Gavrelle, Cherisy, and the Bois du Sart were all cleared before the end of the month, and the way opened up for the vital movements to follow. It was a feat accompanied by historic deeds of heroism and endurance, notably in the Cherisy area, for German Head-quarters fully realized the danger, and had packed their forward as well as their rearward defences. On 1st September the 6 divisions, preceded by 40 Tanks, advanced to storm a 5-mile position in which no fewer than 11 German divisions,

distributed in depth, manned the intricate defences. The Canadian division, with English battalions on its left flank, attacked on either side of the Arras-Cambrai road, and behind the infantry came a swift-moving force, motor machine-guns, armoured cars, and cavalry. This steel-faced battering-ram went through the successive lines of the Drocourt-Quéant line in two hours—more than a thousand yards an hour—and reached Dury and Cagnicourt, fighting among the ruins. In seven hours the whole of the Drocourt-Quéant line there was pierced and held. On the Canadians' right, the Lowlanders, Naval Brigades, and West Lancashires of the 17th Corps (General Fergusson) had gone forward as valiantly and irresistibly to the conquest of the triangle where the switch-line was coupled with the main Hindenburg line; and, in a little over the seven hours which the left wing had occupied, the triangle area was also won. The German opposition stiffened; their counter-attacks were sent in; but they neither repelled nor hindered. The Canadians stayed triumphant on the Dury Ridge: the 63rd Division, on the right, reached the railway east of Quéant, and the West Lancashires, coming through with their reserve battalion, overlapped the village on the north.

By midnight Quéant was gone, and the linch-pin of the German northern fortified lines had been removed. This, the Battle of the Scarpe, was more than a turning point. It was the beginning of the end. It followed so quickly on the Battles of Amiens and Bapaume that Ludendorff, with his right flank threatened, had no option but to call back von Boehn's divisions with all possible speed to the shelter of the main Hindenburg defences. The battle had been a spectacular success, for it had captured 16,000 prisoners and 200 guns, but its more important strategic results were immediately apparent. By 9th September Ludendorff's strategic retirement, "according to plan", was a hasty retreat with little plan that would be permanently valuable. Whereas his own swift retreat in 1917 had deranged the schemes of Nivelle, the retreat under compulsion had covered Ludendorff with the confusion of its consequences. Between 21st August and 9th September some 470 guns and 53,000 prisoners had been wrenched from him; the French had been able to occupy Ham and Chauny, and draw within sight of La Fère, while behind the fortress lines, on the holding of which no high hopes could be placed, he awaited with apprehension the next blow of his adversaries.

It remains to add that Haig's victories had the effect of hastening the German withdrawal from the Lys salient, as Ludendorff became harder pressed for troops with which to fill out his skeleton battalions, and by 6th September Bailleul, Merville, and Neuve Chapelle were regained by the British. The American divisions working with these had passed beyond Kemmel Hill.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### FOCH'S CAMPAIGN OF 1918—THE EXHAUSTION BY THE FRENCH OF LUDENDORFF'S RESERVES

General Foch, while still a lecturer, had always insisted as the cardinal principle of war that before attempting to bring the enemy to his knees it was necessary to allow him or compel him to exhaust his own resources. That principle had never before been put into operation by any general on the Western Front, though its necessity became more evident as one knock-out blow after another failed; and the reason why it had been neglected was because no one had learned to apply it to trench warfare. Foch divined the secret, and the "limited objective", which had been a French doctrine before the great failure of 1917 first interrupted its operations, and then postponed

its triumph, was part of his plan. He did not know how long the wearing effect of these " limited objectives " would take before he could supersede them by the knock-out blow that every general aspired to deliver, but he was certain that the Germans must, after their own exhausting effort, begin to stagger under a succession of punches. The first punch had been the Marne salient; the second had been Haig's action on the Somme salient aided by those which Debeney and Humbert were able to inflict at the same time. One more punch was necessary and then the opening for the knock-out blow might present itself. We must first consider these preliminary tactics so far as the French and American forces took part in them.

On 3rd August General Mangin had secured Soissons and occupied the Aisne down to Venizel, while the American division with General Dégoutte's army pressed on to Fismes, on the Vesle, with British and French divisions coming up on their right to Branscourt and Champigny. The next day the Americans were over the Vesle, which was in flood at various points, but the Germans had by no means made up their minds to retreat to the Aisne, and besides setting counter-attacks in motion began to dig themselves in on the Vesle heights. General Foch thereupon, acting on his theory of limited objectives, handed the service over to Haig, who proceeded to punch the Germans vigorously during the rest of August; while the American divisions, facing the Prussian Guards and other excellent German divisions on the Vesle, exchanged fights for bridgeheads with them for three weeks. The position was extremely embarrassing for Ludendorff, who dared not let go on the Vesle, but who saw his reserves being drawn from other parts of the line, as well as from general reserve, to meet the blows of Haig. Debeney co-operated with Rawlinson in the British offensive, and when, on the third day of it, he had pushed forward his right towards Montdidier, Humbert set his neighbouring army in motion, marching towards Roye with the idea that Montdidier and a number of German soldiers would be nipped between the two northerly-advancing fronts. That is what happened.

General Humbert's first movements did not disclose the intention to add another to Foch's body blows. All he was asked to do was to reach the road from Montdidier to Compiègne, between Rollot and Cuvilly, and to take a step forward averaging 3 miles over his whole front, though he would go farther if he could. Ludendorff, still hoping to withdraw deliberately, had anticipated some such advance by beginning to withdraw his troops on the night of 9th August from some of their forward positions. Nevertheless, Humbert's attack was not expected by them so soon, and here again Ludendorff encountered a " regrettable incident ", for Humbert, attacking at dawn of the 10th with a few Tanks, and without a preliminary bombardment, threw his infantry into the enemy's first lines, while the Germans were still waiting for the attack to begin. Compiègne, Ressons, and Chevincourt were reached not in a day but in an hour, and, elated by success, the French added 4 miles more to the original 3 in the direction of Roye, which was on their right; and in the difficult ground in front of their left were a mile beyond the points they had hoped to reach. This enlargement of the Third Army's success enabled Foch with swift decision to alter the original plan to one productive of more damaging results. Instead of plodding on towards Roye, where he would find stiffening resistance, General Humbert wheeled to his right so as to face eastwards and to direct his attack towards the tumble of hills known as the Lassigny (Thiescourt) *massif*.

This was a serious undertaking, but the capture of the *massif* would facilitate the work of Debeney and Rawlinson, and would take from the Germans all the fruits of the advance they had made in June while enlarging the Somme salient to the south-east. The *massif* was, however, not to be conquered lightly; its wooded heights and ravines were admirably designed to favour a German retarding action through their most effective weapons the machine-guns. The heights of the *massif* stretch eastwards for 8 miles from Ressons, on the little Matz,

to the Divette. Both rivers are tributaries of the Oise, and between them spurs and ravines jut out like fronds of a fern, the spine of which runs through the Bois de Thiescourt. But once this wooded range was dominated the whole ridge from Plemont, near Lassigny, to Mont Renaud, near Noyon, was turned. Humbert's army made a good start on the 11th, going 2 miles in the new direction, and from that date it forced its way onward, never by any sensational advance, for that was no longer possible while Ludendorff could spare machine-gunners to hold on, but by pushing round one strong position after another, and then utilising the sharp salients thus formed for repeating the process farther on. By the 15th the highest point of the *massif* was captured; but the steady scientific pincers were kept to their difficult and dangerous task till 21st August. Before that they had done all that was required. Junction had been made with Debeney's army near Canny; and on the 18th General Foch had put his foot on another pedal and sent Mangin's army into action in another direction.

General Mangin advanced against the Germans in the angle which the Aisne makes with the Oise, and his movement, apart from its value in perplexing Ludendorff as to where to distribute his reinforcements, may be viewed as co-operating with that of Humbert, though acting on a parallel instead of a convergent line. He advanced north-eastwards between Carlepont and Fontenoy on a front of 9 miles; and in two days had captured the Nampcel plateau. Then, on 20th August, he came forward with the second section of his army, thus extending his front from 9 miles to 16, and taking it westwards to Bailly on the Oise. This second half of his movement, which taken as a whole was a most ingenious piece of work—since his first operations had offered no hint of it—gave him a footing on the plateau north of Vaissens and took his left wing to the outskirts of Carlepont and Caisnes. He was now on the road across the Oise to Noyon, 5 miles distant. On the morning of the 21st (when far to the north Byng was occupying all the energies of von Boehn), Mangin's left continued to edge farther along the Oise, forcing the Germans from their strong position in the forest of Carlepont to a precarious pocket between the river and the main road. While they were considering the problem of withdrawal, their bridges across the Oise were being bombed by French airmen, and Mangin's left was steadily creeping to Bretigny, 5 miles by river from Noyon, while his right reached Quincy, on the Oise-Aisne Canal. His progress had been the signal to Humbert, whose advance, now freed from the threat to its right flank, was facilitated, and could be made on either side of the *massif*, the whole of which was held by the 22nd, together with the low ground beyond it to the Divette. Mont Renaud, the guardian hill of Noyon, was only 3 miles away. He took breath for his last push, and then at a bound captured the German positions on the reverse slopes of the *massif*, at the same time thrusting forward his right over the Oise lowlands to Pont l'Evêque, just below Mont Renaud and Noyon. On the 28th Noyon's fall was assured. It was encircled on the 29th. The armies both of Mangin and Debeney had co-operated with that of Humbert to make its fall a certainty, and to reap further advantages from it.

Mangin, on the night of 22nd August, holding the southern bank of the Oise as far as Sempigny and that of the Ailette to a point about opposite Coucy-le-Château, continued to press forward across the Ailette. He was now engaged with Debeney (opposite Roye, on which the French First Army was moving), and Humbert, in drawing a loop round Roye and Noyon. The Germans counter-attacked Debeney at the Roye end of the loop but could neither keep him back nor prevent him from coming forward, which he did on the heels of their counter-attack (August 26th – 27th), making an irregular advance of about 12 miles on either side of Roye. Roye fell like a ripe pear, and Chaulnes followed. Ludendorff's plans of deliberate retreat were therefore spoilt at this end of the great Somme-Oise salient also: he simply could not afford the divisions with which to counter-attack, and to save the huge stores and ammunition dumps collected in this area. He had to sacrifice

these instead of men, and to get back in such haste that, almost as if in an unopposed advance, the First French Army of Debeney came right up to the Canal du Nord between Nesle and Noyon.

From Noyon and Nesle two highways run north and east to Ham, and a third from Noyon to Chauny in the Oise valley. The first two of these roads came under the guns of Debeney and Humbert; the third under those of Mangin, while the aeroplanes attacked the German communications on all three. The enemy had no choice but withdrawal from the narrowing Nesle-Noyon-Chauny salient, and Mangin, who had gained touch with Humbert at Pont l'Evêque, was adding further reasons for the German withdrawal. Noyon, which, as already mentioned, was encircled on the 28th, fell to one of his best divisions. The Germans at any rate may claim the credit that they did not go without fighting, and for some time they clung to Mont St. Simeon, the height commanding the road from Noyon to Ham. That, however, became untenable when Debeney's army, crossing the Canal du Nord on 1st September, wheeled eastwards on a front which would bring them both to Ham and to Guiscard, and would consequently threaten the Germans' best road of retreat from Mont St. Simeon and Noyon. Debeney established close liaison with Humbert, and his army did the marching while that of his colleague resumed its patient, difficult work of driving back the Germans from pivoted positions which they had perforce to defend by sacrificing rear-guards. Debeney crossed the double obstacle of the Somme and its canal at Epancourt with his left wing on 4th September, thus taking the first step of his journey from Nesle to Ham, while Humbert began his march on Chauny next day. When there, Humbert would be in a position to assist Mangin in the attack on the St. Gobain *massif*, which was the key to Laon.

Mangin, who for the time being had done his share of the work in harassing the Germans and reducing their strength, was more or less stationary on the Ailette. But Ludendorff could not afford to leave so dangerous an intruder unwatched, and in order to hold him back brought up 12 new, but by no means fresh, divisions. The German divisions had now fallen much below strength, and the usage they suffered in front of Mangin, where they could not be employed in the most scientific, or least costly, manner, still further reduced them. Mangin all the time was steadily bringing round his left closer to the Forest of St. Gobain, and creeping up its plateaux on the right. General Foch now called up General Dégoutte's Sixth Army to emphasize Mangin's threat. Mangin had crossed the Ailette on 29th August. Dégoutte and some picked American divisions began to exert pressure to help Mangin's right north of Soissons. In the first week of September the position of the French armies of the centre was as follows:—(1) Debeney had crossed the Somme on a 6-mile front between Epancourt and Offay, and on a front north-west of Ham pointed towards St. Quentin; (2), Humbert, south-east of Ham, was past the group of hills which separate Noyon from Chauny, close to Tergnier, and was looking forward to La Fère; (3), Mangin's left wing was back again in Coucy-le-Château, and beyond, and his right held the road and railway thence to Soissons; (4), Dégoutte was spreading both northwards from Soissons and eastward along the Aisne.

In the strategic sense Debeney and Humbert were converging on St. Quentin and Mangin and Dégoutte on Laon. Each army was about 12 miles from its objective, Mangin, on the Vauxaillon plateau, being nearest to Laon. A point of great value was that their presence—all alive and all moving—kept Ludendorff in uncertainty as to the quarter from which the next attack would come. He already had his hands full with the attacks of the British armies under Rawlinson, Byng, and Horne, and was certain that another attack from the first of these was imminent. He had to draw reinforcements from somewhere, and decided to obtain them by shortening his front on the Vesle, where de Mitry, with French and American divisions, had been facing the Seventh and Ninth Armies. The orders to the German armies to retire to the Aisne had been given on 4th September, and by 5th

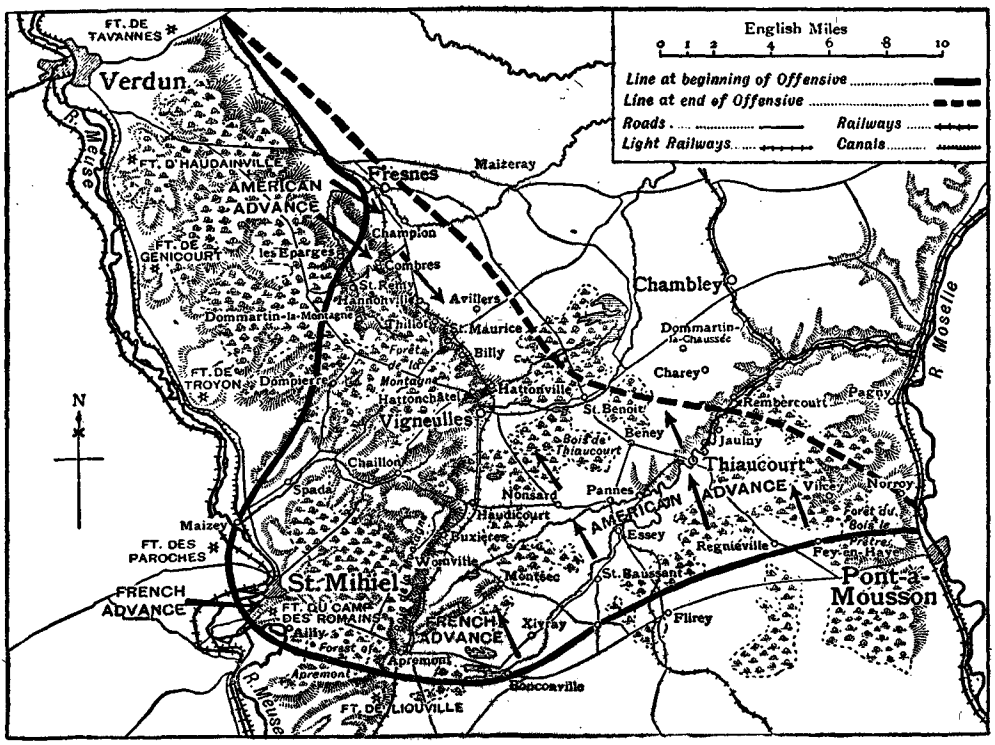
September both the German (on a 19-mile front of retirement), and the Franco-American forces were on the move. The retirement was not unmolested or inexpensive. The Americans, on the immediate right of Mangin, crossed the high ground to the north of the Vesle and occupied the Aisne from Condé to Viel-Arcy.

Two days later Mangin crowned his work by capturing the ruined Fort de Condé, which had been a goal in the Battle of Malmaison a year before, and stands on the plateau dominating the western end of the Chemin des Dames. Vauxaillon was reached the same day, and the French climbed once more the western slopes of the Laffaux plateau, in circumstances vastly changed from those which had accompanied the tragedy of the first day's attack of Mangin's army the year before. The Germans were in very different conditions for resistance in 1918; their counter-attacks, that had been so damaging in the first assault on the Chemin des Dames, crumpled before the renewed onslaughts with which Mangin's divisions met them. On 14th September this commander retook Allemant and Laffaux Mill, and, planted immovably on those historic heights, occupied also the Mont-des-Singes (16th), which overlooks the railway to Laon through the Vauxaillon defile. Once again the towers of Laon came into view. Mangin's advance, which had directed its main effort eastwards instead of north-westwards, had been seconded by parallel advances on the part of the armies of Humbert and Debeney, who maintained a fighting line from Péronne to Noyon, and whose incessant menace, coupled with that of Mangin's movement, prevented the diversion of Ludendorff's reserves to a point farther north, where, in the second week of September they were badly needed to hold up another British drive at Epéhy. By 10th September Humbert's Third Army, after taking the fort of Liez, reached the line Travecy-Henancourt-Contescourt; and Debeney's First Army had captured Roupy and Etreillers. There were two more pushes to come, exclusive of the comparatively lightly opposed one by which the American divisions followed up the retreat of the German Seventh and Ninth Armies to the Aisne. One of these was a British one, the other an American one, in which the United States divisions first acted together as an army.

The British movement is known as the Battle of Epéhy; and it was the preliminary both to the great attack on the Hindenburg line on which Sir Douglas Haig staked his reputation as a commander, about which he perhaps cared little, and the future of the British share of the campaign, about which he cared a great deal. The British advance, viewed as one movement, was towards Cambrai, which was the northern bastion of the German defences, as La Fère and Laon were the twin bastions to the south. Sir Douglas Haig's masterly approach to the German principal defence here began at Havrincourt, where the Canal du Nord, the advance moat of Cambrai, turns to the north. Above Havrincourt the approaches were unpracticably difficult—long glacis slopes swept and commanded by every sort of gun. South of Havrincourt they went away from the canal at an angle, running south-eastwards over ridges till they reached the second moat, the Scheldt Canal at Bantouzelle. Thence the fortified lines ran in front of the canal to St. Quentin. On 2nd September the Third Army (4th and 6th Corps) began what seemed a local attack without ulterior significance on a 5-mile front. Four divisions were employed (37th, 62nd, 2nd, and New Zealanders), and the first two of these took Havrincourt and Trescault, the jumping-off places for the movement to follow. Much lower down the British line, where it joined Debeney's First Army, the 9th Corps and the Australians continued to skirmish skilfully forward till they had captured Maissemy, where Gough's army had been forced back in the March offensive: and approached those other places of tragic memory, Le Vergnier and Templeux-le-Gerard. This had all been done by 17th September, and in the intervals Ludendorff had found himself struck before he was ready in the St. Mihiel salient by the Americans, an operation presently to be described.

Sir Douglas Haig, having thus manœuvred for position, began without waiting a moment

the last of the preliminary movements which was to bring him to the gates of the Hindenburg fortress. On the 18th in heavy rain the Third and Fourth Armies went forward together on a 17-mile front, extending from Gouzeaucourt below Havrincourt, the pivot, to Holnon Wood, where the French First Army lent a hand. They gained a victory which was only less than surprising because had to fight for every shell-hole and trench and dug-out they conquered. But at nightfall the last spark of German resistance at Epéhy had been quenched, and by noon of next day the important positions at Gricourt—important because otherwise they would have been in the way of Sir Douglas Haig's greater plan—were cleared up on the right. The general results of all these pre-




Cutting off the St. Mihiel Salient: map showing approximately the Allied Line before and after the Franco-American attack in September 1918

of the greater one which was to follow; and it was typical alike of the waning courage of the Germans and the waxing confidence of the British armies, both in their ability to fight and in the machinery of their organization. Fifteen British divisions went through 3 miles of organized defences, beating 20 German divisions who could not stop them, and taking from them 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns. The hardest fighting was on the extreme right towards the French and St. Quentin, and at the left centre about Epéhy, where the 6th, 12th, 18th, and 58th Divisions liminaries had been to bring the British front up to striking distance of the Hindenburg line. The French also were back in the positions on which they had stood at the beginning of Ludendorff's 1918 campaign, and in one sector—the long quiescent one of St. Mihiel—the Allies stood farther north, and the Germans farther back, than they had done since the first months of the war in 1914.

The St. Mihiel salient was a part of the German advance in 1914 when, in attempting to come through south of Verdun, they had

gained possession of part of the heights of the Meuse down to St. Mihiel and the Roman Camp fort by the side of the river. General Joffre had tried to drive the Germans from their wedge-like salient in 1915, and the struggles at Les Eparges on the western face, and Aprémont on the southern, were bloody, and only successful in the sense that they prevented any considerable advantage to the enemy from accruing in consequence of his threatening position. The salient became a kind of No Man's Land, which one side could not cross and the other could not leave; and no operations were based on its possession, though had the struggle for Verdun ended differently it would have worn a different complexion. Ludendorff rightly declared that its abandonment had been more than once under consideration. It may have been in 1916-17, and certainly was in 1918, when German Head-quarters were casting everywhere for men. It was held by 7 German divisions and 2 Austro-Hungarian in September, 1918, the latter being part of the reinforcements which Ludendorff had been glad to accept from the partner whom, in his *Memories*, he likened to a corpse to which the strong and vital German was tied by alliance. Some of the German divisions were by no means first-class: but Ludendorff, relying on the natural strength of a position which had so long defied the efforts of the French, as well as on the superior observation posts which enabled the Germans to overlook the preparations of their opponents, had thought them quite sufficient with which to hold the salient or to withdraw deliberately from it when he gave the word.

Some of the heavy artillery had already been withdrawn late in August or early in September, but the attack which the Americans made under General Pershing caught General Fuchs, Ludendorff's local commander, unawares. American divisions which had been tried in other areas of conflict had been quietly concentrated south-east of Verdun so as to form the First American Army, and this concentration was known to the Germans, though its strength and purpose remained obscure. Almost to the end the German Head-quarters Staff refused to believe in the efficiency of these units as a whole, and affected to regard them merely as reinforcements whom the French and British could use as stop-gaps in quiet sectors from which more experienced troops could be transported. The American army on 12th September was principally concentrated along a 10-mile front, extending from Xivray (west) to Fey-en-Haye (east), by the Forest of Apremont, where it linked up with the French. Two French divisions on the American army's left were curved round the fortified Roman Camp, and on the western face of the salient French and American troops together held the line of the heights of the Meuse from Les Eparges down to Spada, and thence across the Meuse to Chauvancourt, where the Germans held a bridge-head on the western side of the Meuse. The 2 Austro-Hungarian divisions were on the western face of the salient between Combres and Spada.

The fight began with a heavy bombardment necessitated by the strongly fortified character of the defences, and then the young American army, preceded by Tanks, was loosed on the southern face. This attack was made by 2 corps, of 7 divisions in all, on the southern face, and simultaneously another 2 divisions, attacking on the western face, drove in eastwards towards the southern attack. The German divisions were, as we have said, not first-class, and they may have known of the intention to remove them from the salient, but on the whole they put up a poor resistance, and in thirty hours the two American forces had joined hands. Their chief enemy was the mud. At one point near Seicheprez, where the Americans had fought the Germans fiercely in previous encounters, the work of the German machine-gunners had a reminiscent quality, but the Tanks cleared the nests out, and at seven o'clock in the morning the Seicheprez Ridge was passed and the line rolled forward in open warfare. This southern advance went on little checked till six in the evening, when the Americans had reached Thiaucourt and laid hands on the light railway. The French divisions, curving round the nose of the salient, had meanwhile advanced to protect the Ameri-

can flank and pin the enemy. They, too, had got forward, passing the Forest of Apremont and outflanking St. Mihiel.

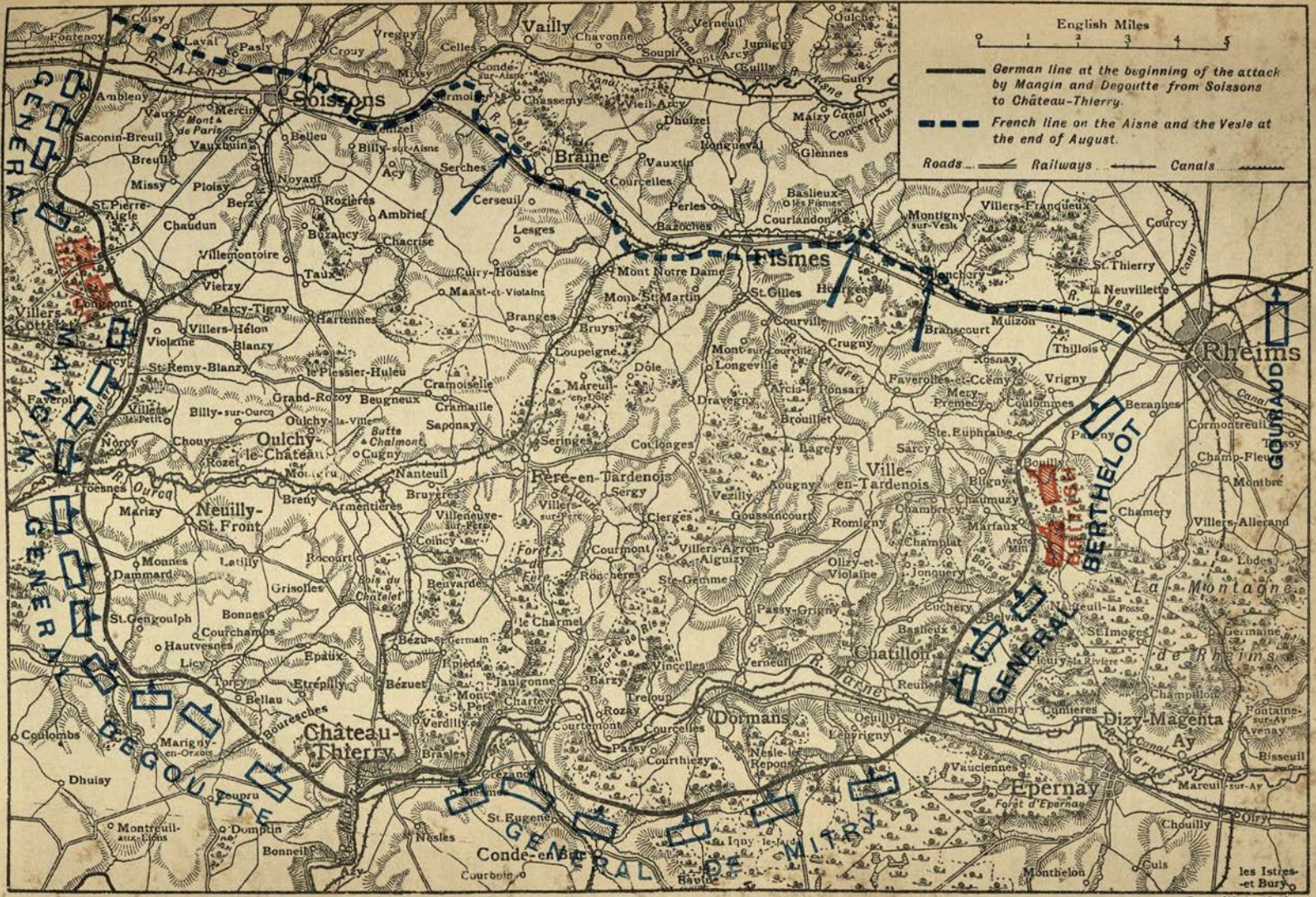
The western, or north-western attack had started three hours later, and was conducted by 1 French division and 2 American (the American division was larger than either German, French, or British at this stage of the war), attacking from Les Eparges to Seuzy. Their task was harder, and the despised Austro-Hungarians fought well about Combres, where the wooded hills sheltered the machine-guns. But early in the afternoon the defenders had been hammered or manœuvred out of their positions, and the pincers began to close in according to plan. The German divisions did not attempt to retreat in the orthodox manner of fighting rear-guards, but broke into small parties, though they made a great effort to get out their guns by way of Vigneulles before the bottle-neck of their retreat was closed. The neck would have been closed earlier but for the resistance of the Austro-Hungarian divisions between Combres and Spada. By eight o'clock next morning the salient was gone. The Germans had left in its 150 square miles some 10,000 prisoners and 440 guns.

The results of the victory were by no means limited to this. The restoration of direct communication between Verdun and Commercy facilitated along the Meuse valley railway the French supply system; and a new light had been thrown on the ability of the Americans, who at St. Mihiel had revealed excellent staff work and tactical leading, in addition to their admitted eagerness to fight. Moreover, now that the salient was gone, a new threat was apparent to the German fortress of Metz, as well as to the iron-fields of Briey. The apprehension which Ludendorff may have felt was encouraged by the Allied Intelligence Department, and the rumour spread. It is certain that the Germans, almost to the end of hostilities, kept a watching force on the front here in apprehension of an American attack east of the Meuse. This was, in fact, no part of Foch's plan which, bold and vast as it was, narrowed its concentrated effort to destroying the German centre, with the intention of dividing the German armies supplied through the north from those of the eastern frontier, and afterwards, if an afterwards should be necessary, of rolling up the eastern section. The main American forces were concentrated for this purpose, after the St. Mihiel victory, between the Argonne and Verdun, not between Verdun and Metz.

General Pershing's victory completed the series of operations by which Foch had contemplated the exhaustion of Ludendorff's effectives. These effectives had reached their greatest strength in 1918 after the Somme-Oise battle, and before the surprise of the Chemin des Dames, when they amounted to 207 divisions, of which 60 were in reserve. In the third week of September, 1918, they had fallen to 185, the balance of 22 having been eaten up in supplying the losses of those that remained; and the reserve divisions had fallen to 21. This weakening was due not only to Foch's methods, or to the very severe losses which Haig's armies had inflicted, but to the fact that every effort of Ludendorff had been pushed beyond those profitable limits after which a battle degenerates into hard slogging with losses on both sides, probably greater among the attackers. Moreover, at last, the way in which Germany had for three years been drawing on her recruit classes *in advance* was beginning to tell its tale.

Germany had no more young men coming on: only boys and old men. At the same time the Allied strength had been going up, mainly by the American reinforcements, which now numbered 25 large divisions ready for service (as the Americans say), with more to come; and the British army, despite its losses, had now, thanks to reinforcements from home and overseas, 57 divisions instead of the 53 of July. The American division was a unit double the size of those of the Allies or of the Germans. Still more discrepant was the supply of guns and shells. The Allies had all they wanted and more[1]; the Germans had lost 2000 guns and mountains of ammunition which they could ill afford, and both in power and

[1] The guns had gone up from 18,000 to 21,000 in their numbers.




MAP TO ILLUSTRATE "FOCH'S COUNTER STROKE"

Emery Walker Ltd. sc.

quality the German artillery arm was falling. Last of all, the tide of feeling had changed. German *moral* was not what it was, as the easy surrenders told from time to time. The French were filled with a new hope and rejoicing; the British army, after one of the greatest recoveries in history, was certain of victory; the Americans were eager crusaders in its pursuit. The " Imponderables ", as well as the material advantages, were all on the side of the Allies.

## CHAPTER XIX

### FOCH'S CAMPAIGN OF 1918—THE HINDENBURG LINE BROKEN

As the result of the preliminary operations of the First, Third, and Fourth British Armies, the First, Third, Sixth, Seventh, Tenth French Armies, and the First American Army, Foch had now brought back the German armies to the line on which, last as first, they challenged the Allies for the mastery of Europe in France and in Belgium. It ran from the coast, east of Ypres and Armentières, west of Douai, Cambrai, and St. Quentin, to La Fère. From the Oise it curved round the St. Gobain *massif*, behind the Chemin des Dames, north of Rheims and the old Moronvilliers position, and so eastwards through Champagne and the Forest of the Argonne to the Meuse north of Verdun. North of the line, not parallel to it, but converging as it ran eastwards, was the great lateral railway line through Brussels, Mons, Maubeuge, Mezières, Sedan, and Metz, which was the German chief artery of communications. Foch desired to cut this artery, and his plan was to do so on either side of the great curve which the German line made when, after leaving La Fère, it turned from north and south, to west and east. The right wing of his thrust would be made by Gouraud's army east of Rheims, and the American army east of the Argonne. These would advance, not through the Argonne Forest, but on either side of it, thus escaping the overwhelming task of breaking a way through the forests' protected mazes, the one army aiming at Mezières, the other at Sedan.

The attack on the western face of the curve, which is to be regarded as Foch's left-wing thrust, was to be made by the Third and Fourth British Armies and the First French Army, and should penetrate through Cambrai and St. Quentin towards Maubeuge. The French armies of Humbert and Mangin were to keep Ludendorff occupied round the nose of the curve. Foch calculated further that these attacks, if they prospered, would compel Ludendorff still further to draw upon his coastal sectors for reinforcements, and that when the Flanders front was thus weakened an attack on this extreme flank by the Belgian army and the British Second Army would be successful. A portion of Dégoutte's army was sent northwards in readiness to add weight to this blow; and to the Fifth British Army, under Birdwood, was assigned a task, in the neighbourhood of Lille and Lens, similar to that which Humbert and Mangin were to undertake at the St. Gobain *massif*, namely, that of pinning the Germans to their positions.

As against this strategy of open warfare, Ludendorff had nothing to present except passive resistance in his armoured lines. The Hindenburg line was a popular name invented by the British soldiers. When Ludendorff assumed the post of adviser-in-chief on the Western Front at the end of 1916, the Germans had sustained that failure at Verdun which cost them the cream of their army, and had been heavily reduced by the slogging match on the Somme. Ludendorff's device for economizing men was to substitute a chord for an arc over the portion of the front between the Somme and the Oise, and to make the chord impregnable by fortifications. Thus came into existence

the fortified area—a " line " is a complete misnomer, for the area was several miles in depth—which ran from east of Arras and protected Cambrai (8 miles behind), St. Quentin, and La Fère, and continued its course to St. Gobain. This section in its northern part, covering Cambrai and St. Quentin, was called the Siegfried line by the Germans themselves; its southern portion, which covered Laon, was named the Alberich position. It was the Siegfried line that the British broke in September, 1918, and with it every hope of a resumed German offensive, or a continued German defensive. It was the most elaborate position of all.

Next in importance was the section which had been begun later as a protection should Vimy Ridge fall. It joined the Siegfried position at Quéant, west of Cambrai, and ran through Drocourt, behind Lens, up to Lille. The Germans called it the Wotan line, but the British, when Horne's First Army broke it on 2nd September, had no other name for it but the Drocourt-Quéant switch. Other extensions of the Siegfried and Alberich lines were the Brunnhilde, in Champagne, and the Kriemhild and Michael positions, which protected the railway joining Mezières, Sedan, and Metz. The Germans had put all their knowledge of military fortification, and all the experience they had gained of trench-warfare in attack and defence during the war, as well as all the forced labour they could collect from Belgium and Northern France and from Russian prisoners, into the multiple works—" the vast designs of those laboured rampart lines ".

The Siegfried defences, which the British armies were to assault between Cambrai and St. Quentin, were 10 miles in depth from their outposts at Epéhy to their rearmost trenches, the idea of the plan on which they were constructed being that, however successful an assault might prove in breaking in, it must pause to collect guns and shells before going on, and meanwhile would find itself enclosed in a geometrically planned maze of fortresses. The wire in front of trenches was not double or treble, but sometimes hundreds of feet in depth; and each portion was cut so as to defend another. Heavily constructed works, advancing in scale from the concrete pill-box to the underground barracks, were provided for shelter. Through the middle of the system ran the two canals, the Canal du Nord and the St Quentin, sunk in deep cuttings, which, by borings into the banks, were utilized to give inexpugnable shelter. Between Bellecourt and Vendhuille a tunnel hid the canal for 3½ miles, and made an immense dug-out, connected with the trenches above by shafts. South of Bellecourt the cutting grew shallower, and was nearly flush with the ground at Bellenglise, where it was dry. On the hillier side were two rows of trench-systems, one 1¼ mile in advance. On the farther side the trenches began again.

This was where the great British blow was to be aimed, and it can now be recognized with what fortitude the British Commander steeled himself for it. He knew what Foch's plans were; he also knew how much depended on the British thrust on the right centre for their success. He knew, and has recorded the risks that were run, the long trial to which his armies had been subjected first in defence, and latterly in a period of fighting which had been uninterrupted since the second week in August. They had won victories, but victories, however cheaply won, exact lives, and lay a heavy burden on the nerves and stamina of the best troops: and it cannot be denied that, high as was the spirit of the armies of 1918, they had not the physical excellence of those of 1916, which were indeed the flower of British manhood. He knew also that failure would not merely react on the whole scheme, but on the German spirit, which, declining now, would be lifted up to a new resistance, in Germany as well as at the front. But to quote words of his as simple as they are modest: " I was convinced that the British attack was the essential part of the whole scheme, and that the moment was favourable. Accordingly I decided to proceed with the attack, and all preparatory measures were carried out as rapidly and as thoroughly as possible."[1]

After the preliminary operations, which Haig had carried out at Epéhy, no attack of

[1] Field-Marshal Haig's Victory Dispatch, 7th Jan., 1919.

moment was set in motion by any Allied army for more than a week; and the German newspapers, in spite of the known hesitations of Ludendorff, assured Germany that the worst was over. The awakening of the dream was furnished by General Pershing's First Army, which, immediately after its success in the St. Mihiel salient, in which its reserve divisions had not been called upon, was secretly transferred to the left bank of the Meuse, while the utmost efforts were made to convince the Germans that an attack towards Metz from the St. Mihiel chord was still intended. The French troops, holding the lines in front of Hill 304 and the Mort Homme were, in fact, not relieved by the Americans till the night of 25th–26th September, the day before the battle of 27th September. Von Gallwitz, the German group commander, was very imperfectly acquainted either with the salient or the meaning of the transfer, and had not reinforced his front.

The backbone of the attack was made by 9 American divisions, with French divisions on either side of them supporting: and by the evening of the 27th the Americans had overwhelmed the Germans, bursting clear through the first-line defences, and in the centre pressing forward 7 miles to the lower slopes of Montfauçon. This was the hill from which the Crown Prince had surveyed the operations on the west bank of the Meuse during the attack at Verdun. The Americans tried hard, with the aid of Tanks, to establish a record by capturing this hill to crown the day. They did not succeed, but they carried Montfauçon next day, and with it the important position of Varennes. By the evening of the 29th the Americans were in possession of the first and second systems of the fortified Kriemhild line, and had a footing in the third system. They had taken 10,000 prisoners.

On the other side of the Argonne, Gouraud's division had attacked simultaneously from Rheims eastwards on an 18-mile front. While the Americans were stretching forwards towards Montfauçon his division stormed the network of trenches east of Moronvilliers, between Tahure and Navarin Farm, and took 7000 prisoners on the first day. The country, pitted with shell-holes from years of bombardments, was hard to traverse, but Gouraud went over 3 miles of it on the first day. It took him three days to get across the Challerange railway, to turn the Moronvilliers position, and make his way to open country. But by 1st October he was 9 miles from his starting point, and had captured 13,000 prisoners and 300 guns. The right wing of Foch's great blow was, therefore, doing all that was expected of it, and Ludendorff must stiffen his lines against Gouraud, as against Pershing. Meanwhile, Mangin was also moving, and took advantage of Ludendorff's distractions to recapture Malmaison and enter Pinon Forest. There could be no relaxation for the Germans there.

But on the left wing, where the British armies were the weapon, the blow had bitten deepest of all. A very heavy bombardment, beginning on the night of the 26th September, paved the way for it, and extended along the front of the First, Third, and Fourth Armies. The plan was to send forward the First and Third Armies first, to clear the way as well as to mask the determining thrust which was to be delivered afterwards by the Fourth Army. At early morning of the 27th, the First and Third Armies went forward on a 13-mile front, on either side of Cambrai from Souchez Lestrés to Gouzeaucourt. The 4 corps (Canadians, 17th, 6th, 4th) were to seize the crossings of the Canal du Nord opposite this sector. If they could do this, as they did, they would be able, even with a narrow foothold on the German side of the canal, to spread out fanwise to the north, and get behind the German defenders who held the less assailable northern portion of the canal. The dangerous manœuvre was accomplished; the canal was crossed, and over the whole 13 miles of front the infantry, with Tanks which got across afterwards to help them, broke deeply into the Siegfried positions. It was not done without fierce fighting: the German counter-attacks at Beaucourt, Ribecourt, and the old Cambrai battle-ground of Flesquières Ridges, were incessant, and resistance was strongest where, on the British right, it was most important for the attackers to obtain a footing

in order to protect the flank of the Fourth Army's attack when it followed.

But Ribecourt and Flesquières (5th, 42nd, and 3rd Divisions) were taken and held, and the German front-line defenders pushed back beyond them. In the centre, where the 57th Division secured the bridge-heads, and the 52nd Division made use of them, the high ground overlooking Graincourt was carried, and the 63rd and 4th Canadians took Graincourt, and reached the Bourlon Ridge of the first Cambrai attack. As soon as the line of the canal was made safe the engineers got to work amid the falling shells of the German long-range guns, and their bridges enabled reinforcements to come up in order to meet the German reserves. They were needed, for there was hard fighting to do, but every hour old names reappeared on the staff maps of positions taken, and by the end of the day Graincourt, Fontaine-notre-Dame, Bourlon Wood were held, and the victorious line had spread itself north along the canal to Palluel, on the Sensée River. Next day the gap widened and deepened, north to south, Palluel, Sailly, Fontaine-notre-Dame, Novelles-sur-l'Escaut, Marcoing (a key position over the Scheldt Canal), and Gouzeaucourt, had been taken, together with 10,000 prisoners and the 200 guns employed in their defence.

Cambrai was now threatened from the north. While the First and Third Armies were thus preparing the way for the Fourth, General Rawlinson's artillery was playing in his attack by a roar of heavy fire[1] on another 12 miles of German positions. This intensest bombardment of the war continued for 48 hours, driving the German defenders into their dug-outs, and cutting off their daily supplies.

At half-past five on the morning of 29th September, half an hour after the Third Army had opened one supporting attack between Vendhuille and Marcoing, where the canal makes a loop, and General Debeney had begun another in the St. Quentin sector, General Rawlinson's Fourth Army, in between the two, began on a 20-mile front its blows at the heart of the Siegfried line. The head of the assault was taken by 3 corps—the 9th, the 2nd American Corps, with the Australian Corps in support. The 9th Corps attacked the St. Quentin Canal in the Bellenglise stretch, where the canal was deep sunk. The 46th Division, which led, took with it life-belts and mats and rafts: but many men dropped down the steep sides of the cutting and swam, and after that stormed the German trenches on the other bank. Once across they spread south and sliced through the surprised enemy, from whom this one division took 4000 prisoners and 70 guns. South of Bellenglise, the 1st and 6th Divisions reached the west end of the canal tunnel (Le Tronquoy), and linked up with the 32nd Division, which had come up behind the triumphant 46th to consolidate and enlarge what they had taken.

North of Bellenglise the American Corps had a very difficult task, which cut it up severely in spite of all its eagerness and courage. One of its divisions, the 30th, attacking the Bellecourt tunnel front, burst through the defences of Bellecourt and got to Nauroy beyond it, but was attacked by machine-gunners emerging from dug-outs in the division's rear. Australians, coming up behind, had to deal with these without any aid of artillery or Tanks, both of which had gone forward with the main attack, but they were able to cope with them, and made a new link across the seas. The 27th American Division had a similar, and even more costly, experience, for it went too far in advance of its flanking British supports, and was badly enfiladed from Vendhuille. Nothing but desperate gallantry took the Americans on to Bony, where a ferocious struggle for the village which they captured put the finishing touch to their day's work. North of them the slopes about Vendhuille were also cleared by British divisions, who forced their way across the canal above the tunnel. Meanwhile, the Third Army had made the best of the day by capturing Masnières—a great point, since now it held the crossings of the Scheldt Canal between Masnières and Cambrai.

This was the beginning. Next day the fissure was enlarged. The Tronquoy tunnel

[1] Nearly a million shells were fired.

*British Official Photograph*

AFTER THE GERMAN RETREAT: KING ALBERT'S ENTRY INTO BRUGES

The King of the Belgians—in the centre, with the Queen on his left—reviewing his troops as they marched through the square on 25 October, 1918

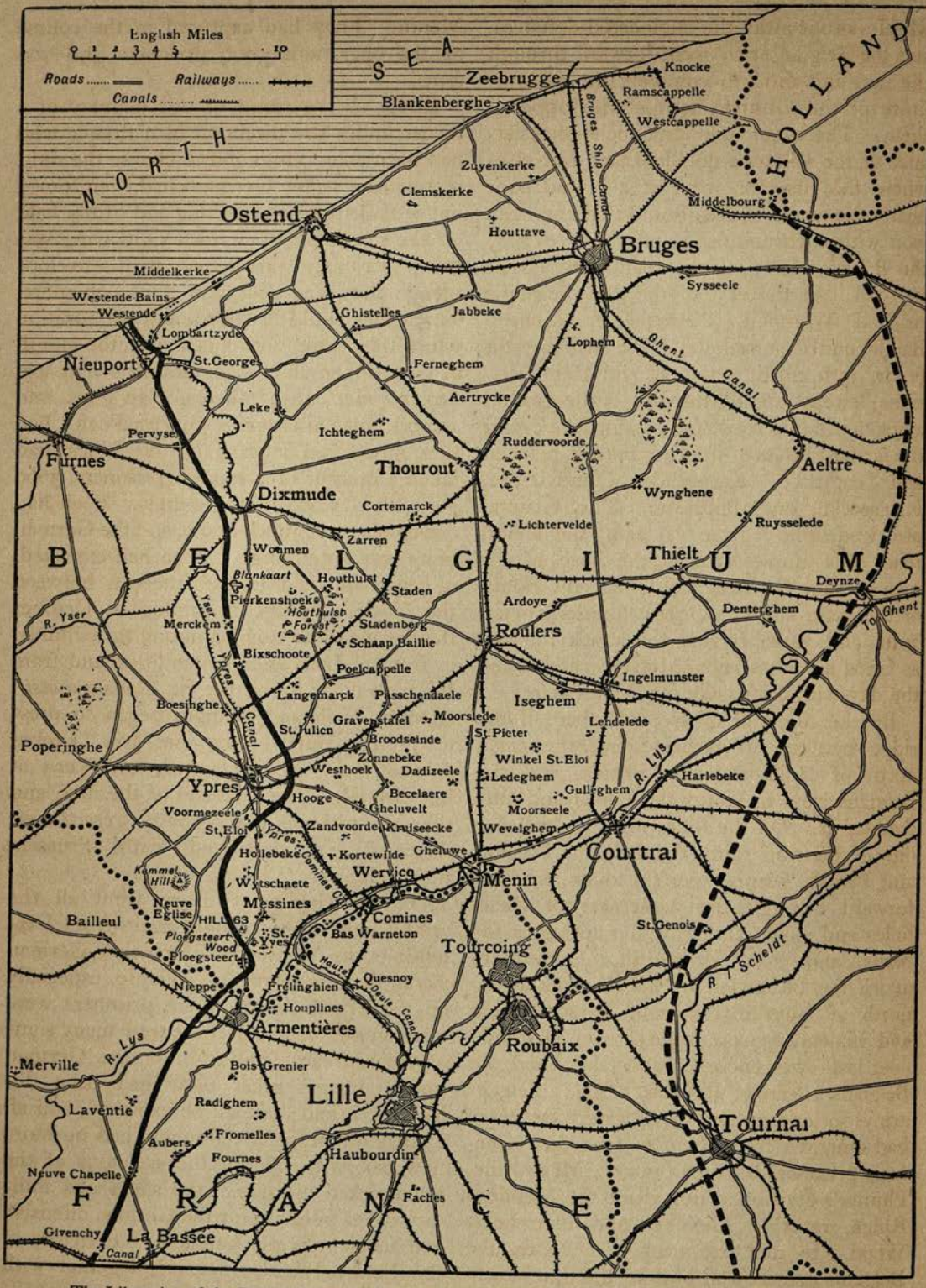
was taken by the 1st and 32nd British Divisions—another splendid feat—and the Germans abandoned Gonnelieu and Villers Guislain as too hot to ho'd, thus ceding a further stretch of the Scheldt Canal. On the 31st the 9th Corps and the Australians linked up with Debeney in an attack on either side of St. Quentin, the immediate consequence of which was that the Germans retired from that town. The attack was now general all along the front of the four armies, the three British and the French. Leverguier was taken (32nd Division). The Australians, passing through the ground captured by the Americans, pressed on to the last line of the Siegfried system at Beaurevoir. The New Zealanders and 3rd Division crept closer to Cambrai. The Canadian Corps cleared the high ground at Ramillies and Blecourt; so that Cambrai was now practically encircled. By 3rd October the Fourth Army had broken through the Beaurevoir line, and the Siegfried defences along it were in British possession. Sequehart and Le Catelet were attacked, the latter falling to the 50th Division after a counter-attack which was an echo of the last fight there, in which British and Germans had met in 1914.

The La Terriere plateau, which dominates a bend of the Scheldt Canal, was also the scene of a last bid by the German defenders. The command of the Scheldt Canal went with it; and with this result of the nine days' battle departed the last hope that the Germans could have entertained of staying their opponents by fortified positions. The greatest of them had been broken in their hands. Thirty British and 2 American divisions had worsted 39 German divisions holding the strongest positions ever fortified by military capacity; had despoiled them of 36,000 prisoners and 380 guns. At last, after four years of effort, the barrier had been pierced. The threat to the German railway communications was now direct, for nothing but the natural obstacles of open country—and an incompleted and insignificant trench line—lay between the British armies and Maubeuge. General Haig and his armies had put the finishing touch to General Foch's conception.

Its results had already appeared in the north. Foch had foreseen that Ludendorff, who already had been withdrawing troops from the Flanders front to protect Cambrai, must still further weaken that front in order to meet the successive blows at his centre. Ludendorff had been obliged to take the risk; he may have thought that, in view of the paralysis of the British advance on the ridges in September and October of 1917, he might rely on a similar protection to the German lines by mud in 1918. A good deal of rain had already fallen to lend substance to this hope. Accordingly, he so far reduced his garrison as to have only 5 divisions to protect the 17 miles of front, Dixmude to Voormezeele—5 miles south of Ypres. The British line at this time ran Voormezeele-Ploegsteert - Nieppe - Neuve - Chapelle - Givenchy. Kemmel Hill had long been abandoned by the Germans in response to their need of shortening the line, and nothing but sharp rear-guard actions had marked the British occupation of Neuve Eglise and Hill 63. Bailleul was found unoccupied on 30th August, and by the evening of 6th September the whole of the Lys salient had disappeared.

On 9th September, following the piercing of the Drocourt-Quéant line by General Horne and the First British Army, Marshal Foch, in a conference held at Cassel, had outlined to King Albert of Belgium the nature of the attack to be delivered in order to take advantage of the drawing away of German divisions from this part of the front. The Belgium army, strengthened by French divisions, was to attack in conjunction with part of Sir Herbert Plumer's Second British Army. The attack planned for 28th September, when that of the British armies of the centre was surging through the Siegfried defences, was as successful as Foch had hoped. Under the weight of the Franco-Belgian-British attack the thinly-held German front melted away. In the British sector, on a front of 4½ miles south of the Ypres-Zonnebeke road, the 19th Corps and 2nd Corps of the Second Army went forward without a preliminary bombardment, and thereby obtained the advantages of surprise.

On the left of the attack, where the Germans were well wired in, a bombardment of great intensity—guns almost wheel to




The Liberation of the Belgian Coast, 1918: map showing approximately the Allies' line on 28th September—represented by the solid line—and on 25th October—represented by the broken line—when the King and Queen of the Belgians made their state entry into Bruges

wheel—swept away the engineered defences, and the Belgian army went forward through the rain and mud to complete the discomfiture of the German troops who opposed them. There was one fierce focus of resistance at the Château de Blankaart, but elsewhere the Belgians went at a bound over nearly the whole of the ground that had been won with such anguished effort in 1917 by the British, and perforce abandoned earlier in 1918. At the end of the day their line reached Woumen, Pierkenshoek, Schaap Baillie, and Broodseinde. The British right (14th, 35th, 29th, 9th, 41st, and 36th Divisions) swept up all the old battle-ground along the Menin road, and passing far beyond the farthest limits of the 1917 battles, reached and captured Karteuilde, Zandvoorde, Kruiseecke, and Beceleare. The General of brigade who led the way along the Menin road rode unmolested at the head of his men through the streets of Gheluvelt. South of the main attack 3 British divisions (31st, 30th, and 34th) carried the attack forward as far as the outskirts of Messines, and ended the day with a struggle for Wytschaete.

By the night of 28th September all the ridge between Wytschaete and the canal north of Hollebeke was British, and the Belgians were in Houthulst Forest and outflanking it. On the following day—another one of pouring rain—the Belgian, French, and British, keeping perfect touch, trudged forward through the wilderness of shell-holes and slush, and over the apologies for roads, and took Moorslede. A counter-attack was beaten off by the Belgians to the north of Houthulst village; Passchendaele and Stadenberg were made secure; Dixmude—at last—was encircled and taken, and the Belgians neared Roulers. The Belgian army, so long pinned to its watery trenches, had emerged from them to take 5500 German prisoners and 100 guns. Meanwhile, Plumer's division swung round the Messines Ridge, retaking Messines and Ploegsteert Wood. In the first week of October, the Belgians passed well beyond the line Moorslede - Staden - Dixmude, and the Second British Army cleared the left bank of the Lys from Comines southwards, captured Gheluvelt and Ledeghem, and threatened Menin. They had captured in the course of the operations 5000 prisoners and 100 guns.

In all, as the result of this delivery of a thrust under the direction of a master who had been able to find and to choose the right moment for it, the Germans had been forced out of their positions so long and firmly held on the sea flank; their own right wing was being seriously threatened with envelopment; they had lost 200 guns, or more, which they could ill afford, and ammunition which they could not replace. In the month of September alone the Germans had lost 120,192 men, 2844 officers, 1600 guns, and 10,000 machine-guns. Since Foch had first struck on 15th July the Allies had taken a quarter of a million prisoners, 3669 guns, and 23,000 machine-guns. Foch had driven his great attack home, and the German army was crumbling. As he had expected, it began to yield in the intervals between the blows. By the beginning of October the German line was beginning to withdraw in front of Lens and Armentières, and from the big salient round the St. Gobain *massif*. At once Haig and Mangin began to press at these points. Early on 3rd October Armentières was reoccupied, and Lens at last cleared. The factories of the first, and the coal-pits of the second, were found damaged or destroyed with Prussian thoroughness.

On the yielding German front all the armies now began to fight again from Dixmude to the Meuse; and for a time German *moral* showed tokens of collapse, especially on the British front, where prisoners were taken in numbers, and there were many signs of disorder and confusion in the German ranks. Foch's great blow had been delivered: it had done all he expected, and all Ludendorff feared. Germany had no more new troops to fill out the skeletons of the bone-picked divisions; the shells and military stores piled up for the German offensive had fallen into the hands of the victors of the Franco-British offensive, together with thousands of guns. Neither guns nor shells could be made good by the works of Essen or Skoda, while all the time the Allied factories, especially in Britain, were increas-

ing their output, and had in this, as in man-power, the support of America.

On the German left more and more Americans were accumulating to drive in Ludendorff's communications west of Metz; in the centre the British were gazing over the plains of Cambrai, the Hindenburg line behind them; in the west the Belgians were fighting confidently in the open. Ludendorff's centre was pinned, and both wings were threatened with envelopment. He could but go from bad to worse, for in the East the situation was growing more helpless every day; Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria-Hungary were moribund. On 28th September Ludendorff and Hindenburg met the Kaiser, and demanded that Germany should ask for an armistice.

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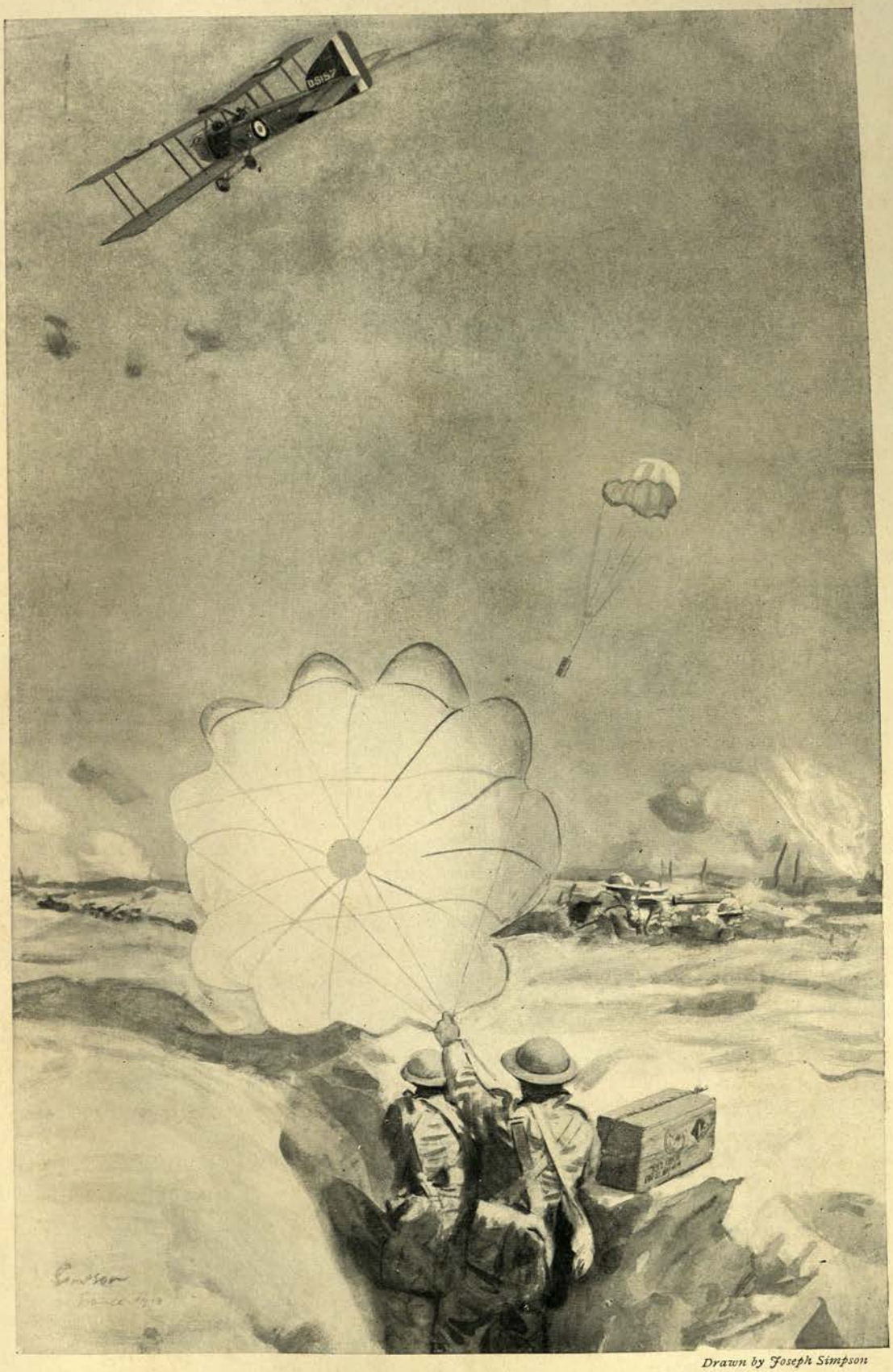
## CHAPTER XX

### FOCH'S CAMPAIGN OF 1918—STEPS TO THE ARMISTICE

In spite of the recognition by Ludendorff and Hindenburg that all hopes of a German renaissance were vain, they were willing to assure the German Government that delaying actions could be fought, which might protract the war till the following spring; and that there was no fear of collapse. These assurances were based on tangible considerations. On every field where the Franco-British forces had sought and found victory, farther progress was extremely difficult, because four years' war had devastated so wide a zone on either side of the trench-line from the sea to the Argonne. The British centre was situated in a region where the roads had been destroyed, the railways torn up, the ground like a Gruyère cheese for holes: there was little shelter and hardly an unbroken roof. French and Americans and Belgians all were dependent on communications over wrecked and blasted country; and before great armies could get forward, or even get again to grips with a foe retreating under an organization little disintegrated in its smooth working, the roads and railways had to be rebuilt, the ground swept. Thus, though Foch threatened the German armies with a huge envelopment, the situation resembled that of the Japanese and Russian armies after the battles of Liao-yang and Mukden, when, for different reasons, the Japanese could not press their victories home so as to convert the Russian defeat into irretrievable disaster.

Everywhere, on the wings and in the centre, the Allied armies, if they did not mark time, had to go forward at a slow march. The Belgian armies did not re-enter Roulers till nearly a fortnight after they were within rifle-shot of it; and it was not till the middle of October that the completion of the liberation of the Belgian coast-line could be taken in hand. The advance was resumed on 14th October, when, after another five hours' bombardment of great intensity, the Belgian army, with French divisions on either flank, and the 10th, 19th, and 2nd Corps of General Plumer's Second Army on the south, went forward on a 28-mile front, from Dixmude to Wervicq, against General von Einem's Fourth German Army. One might almost say that the result of the engagement was a foregone conclusion. On the Belgian front King Albert's soldiers swept over a stretch of country in which there were hardly any but surrendering bodies of Germans to resist them, except at Iseghem, which they had to carry. The French took Roulers. The resistance on the British side was tougher. The 10th and 19th Corps, on the south, had to break through stubborn resistance to reach the rising-ground overlooking Menin and Wevelghem, and the 2nd Corps had to fight for Moorseele. The Allied captures of the day, however, numbered some 8000 prisoners and a number of intact batteries—a sign of the pulverized resistance at some sectors of the front. These signs were yet



*Drawn by Joseph Simpson*

AMMUNITION SUPPLY BY AEROPLANE

"Feeding" the front line from the air by parachute during the last days of fighting

more apparent the next day, when the Belgians were able to move on towards Thourout, and the British towards Courtrai and Comines. Von Einem's army, its main lines of communications with the Lille salient cut, and its road of retirement eastward narrowed, was forced to release its hold on the coast. By the night of the 15th von Einem had lost 12,000 prisoners; by the 16th Menin and Wervicq had been occupied, Thourout surrendered, Courtrai encircled, and Douai threatened farther south. By the 17th the Lombartzyde-Ostend stretch of Belgian coast had been abandoned; and the Belgian cavalry which had entered Ostend was at the gates of Bruges. The French were in Wynghene; the British at Tourcoing.

These events had their repercussion farther south, where, on 17th October also, the 8th Division of the 8th Corps of General Horne's First British Army broke through the enemy's rear-guards to capture Douai, and General Birdwood's Fifth Army crowned weeks of steady pressure about Lille by liberating that long-oppressed town. The troops concerned in the completing operations were the 57th and 59th Divisions (11th Corps). This advance also comprised and completed the liberation of Courtrai, part of which had been occupied after the advance of the Second Army from Menin, but the remainder of which had been ruthlessly shelled by the Germans after their departure. Valenciennes, a vital centre of railway communications, and Tournai, were reached by the British First and Fifth Armies respectively on the 22nd; and on the 25th King Albert re-entered Bruges in state. These and the subsequent operations on the western flank connote the German plan of a deliberate retirement to the shorter line of the Meuse, with a necessary cession of their hold on Belgium, but with a prospect of inflicting another winter's heavy task on the Allies before battle could again be joined in the spring. The design counted on wearing down the patience of the Allies; it took no account of the broken spirit of their own people, which was the cause of its failure.

In front of the British Third and Fourth Armies the progress was similarly slow at first, some Germans lingering in Cambrai till 9th October, though afterwards it became more rapid. The First French Army was only 10 miles east of St. Quentin by 10th October; Gouraud's Champagne army made only 2 miles in a week; and the project of nipping the Germans out of the Argonne by a double advance on either side of it was still hanging fire. The task of General Pershing, and after him of General Liggett, in taking the Americans through the Argonne has been compared in its difficulties with those which the British experienced in the First Battle of the Somme, so well did the forest's tangle of fallen timber, and its tree-clad ridges, lend themselves to the exercise of the German's best weapon—the machine-gun, and their well-served artillery.

Taken altogether, the most useful progress was made in the centre and the right centre. General Mangin and General Dégoutte, whose task it had been to hold the Germans rather than to bruise their own heads against them at the St. Gobain pivot, were able to manœuvre the enemy back as he gave way at other points; and on the 13th of October the French Tenth Army re-entered Laon, so long the seat of German Great General Head-quarters, and established trenches on the line of the River Serre beyond. A pause was here made for six days. In the meantime Haig was seconding Pétain's efforts by a series of fierce rushes which must have delighted that master of the military art, Foch, who declared that for the great attack a commander must throw in every man and every gun without a backward thought of repulse. As soon as his engineers could bring up men and guns Haig forced fresh openings. On 3rd October General Braithwaite made the first move of a powerful gambit by attacking the Beaurevoir defensive line along an 8-mile front, and, breaking through it, reached Montbrehain. He sent back 4000 prisoners. Farther north passages of the Scheldt Canal were forced at Le Catelet and Crevecoeur. These movements were preliminary to the formal opening of the Second and last phase of the British offensive, in which the right of General Horne's First Army (the left being occupied elsewhere), the Third Army

and the Fourth Army, moved forward with their left flank on the canal line running north-east from Cambrai to Mons, while General Debeney protected their right.

The gambit was continued by an attacking move on 8th October, when the British Third and Fourth Armies advanced on a 17-mile front. Their operation was but a part of the larger one which extended past St. Quentin and the Oise through Champagne to the east of the Meuse, practically all the Allied armies taking part in it. The Third British Army led the attack, followed by the Fourth. The German resistance opened well; it collapsed with a suspicious suddenness that can only be attributed to the deterioration of the spirit of the German armies. Von Falkenhayn, in his memoirs, observes that throughout the war a breakthrough could only be carried out when the *moral* of the beaten side had been undermined by one cause or another. That was happening—had happened among the Germans in front of Haig's divisions—and nothing but their organization—like a machine which goes on running in spite of the failing motive-power—pulled them out of disaster. As it was, the Third and Fourth Armies broke through the partially-completed defences; the Tanks, following the infantry, overran them to a depth of 4 miles.

Every road to Le Cateau was blocked with German transport, with which the retreating troops mingled; and 10,000 of the troops surrendered. Another 200 German guns were added to the thousands in the Allied possession. The next day (on which Cambrai was cleared) the cavalry were able to take up the pursuit, and by nightfall the advance-guard was within 2 miles of Le Cateau, and had captured Baudry. The Selle River was reached the next day, and, though the cavalry could not rush the river, the British line was established along it by 13th October, with bridge-heads secured for subsequent crossing. Henceforward the British Commander-in-Chief directed the attack of his centre along the historic route of invasion, with Namur, the meeting-place of the Sambre and the Meuse, as its strategic goal, and Maubeuge its sign-post.

The Fourth Army was the first to move towards it on 17th October, when the communications sufficient to ensure supply had been made secure, and attacked in the neighbourhood of Le Cateau. The immediate design of the operations, in which the French First Army joined, was to force the Selle River and push the Allied line forward till it should run straight from the Sambre and Oise Canal, past the Forest of Mormal, to Valenciennes. The critical action, well understood to be so by the Germans, was fought along a 10-mile front from Le Cateau southwards. It was not an easy victory; for two days the Germans fought strongly. but they were not in positions to stay permanently, and by the 19th the canal was turned at all points south of Catillon, and the Fourth Army's front, northwards, rested on the River Richemont.

The Third Army's task, which was to bring up the next northern section parallel with this, and to force the Selle River, north of Le Cateau, in the process, was no easier. The First Army contributed a division (4th) on the northern flank of the Third Army, which attacked with 7 divisions (19th, Guards, 62nd, 42nd, 5th, 17th, 88th) on the morning of 20th October. The Germans had reinforced the normal river defences with heavily-wired screens, and the Third Army had to fight very hard to get across, and to keep the heights on the German side, when the river was won. (On the same day other troops of the First Army occupied Denain, and reached the slopes overlooking the Ecaillon River.) The Selle River fight was one which called forth as much heroism, and as much determination in the face of discouragement, as any action of the war; and the struggles at Amerval, Neuvilly, and Briastre were a proof that whatever the decline of *moral* which had exhibited itself among the Germans a fortnight or even a week before elsewhere, here at any rate the idea of defence had permeated a residue to the point of recalling some of their hours of greatest resolution.

Once, however, the line of the Selle had been broken the British advance resumed the aspect not of an assault but of a steady drive, in which the Third, Fourth, and First Armies exerted differing degrees of pressure,

and attained different extents of forward movement according as there were fortified villages, open country, or swamps to cross. The action of the night of 22nd October and the morning of 23rd October secured the Ecaillon River (First Army), the smaller river Harpier on a wide front (Third Army), and the west edge of the wood of L'Evêque (Fourth Army). By the 24th the Mormal Forest, which had acted as a reservoir for German reserves, was reached on its western outskirts, and Le Quesnoy was only a mile from the British pickets. In the next three days the Third and Fourth Armies were well to the north-east of the railway running from Le Quesnoy to Valenciennes; and by the 26th the advance of the First Army in the Condé loop of the Scheldt had made the encirclement of Valenciennes certain. That town was taken on the morning of 1st November by a combined movement in which the 17th Corps (Third Army) and the 22nd Canadian Corps (Fourth Army) took part.

During these days, when the Third and Fourth British Armies were refusing to be shaken off from the harried German divisions, the other armies of the Allied line were all exerting the utmost pressure consistent with the possibilities of supply. Dégoutte, with a French army in Belgium, was improving the Allied position south-east of Ghent; Mangin and Guillaumat were wheeling round, with Debeney as their pivot, towards Guise, and the Americans and Gouraud were attaining hard-won success on the eastern enveloping wing of the Argonne. It will add to clearness, however, to follow immediately the steps of the British armies after Valenciennes had been won, and after French, American, and British divisions had co-operated in clearing the Scheldt bank from Avelghem and Anseghem to Mooreghem (31st October). The pieces were set for the big attack on a 30-mile front from Valenciennes to the River Sambre on 4th November, when the First, Third, and Fourth Armies went into action with all the heavy paraphernalia of bombardments and barrage, both of a kind perfected by long practice.

It was the last full-dress battle of the war; and almost for the last time the Tanks were present as the symbol of that rolling, irresistible movement which, earlier in the war, had been so unfortunately symbolized as the steam-roller. On the whole 30 miles the German positions were entered. On the right the 9th Corps (General Braithwaite), of the Fourth Army, had one of the heaviest tasks in crossing the broad Sambre, but fought its way across near Catellon, and by nightfall was 3 miles east. North of it the 13th Corps drove the Germans into the Mormal Forest, and the 25th Division, crossing the Sambre in rafts, fought another battle of Landrecies, where once the British Guards had been engaged in 1914, and where now a battalion of the Prussian Guards were driven out. North of the forest the 37th Division and the New Zealanders threw the Germans back over the Valenciennes railway, and the New Zealanders had the signal, and almost mediæval, honour of receiving the surrender of the walled town of Le Quesnoy from its German commandant.

At the end of the day the right of the First Army and the left of the Third Army were aligned on a front 5 miles east of Valenciennes. On the right of the Fourth Army, General Debeney's First French Army, supporting Haig's thrust, had attacked on a 6-mile front east of Evassigny, between Croy and Tapigny; had forced a crossing over the Sambre canal to the north of Guise, and kept pace with the British. In this Franco-British victory—the final blow at the German centre—the resistance of the enemy was broken, and the war gave him no further opportunity to rally. In all, 24,000 prisoners were taken and more than 500 guns. South of this movement, that of the French and Americans between the Aisne and the Meuse had been augmented with results that are still to be considered. North of it the two French corps which stiffened the Belgian right, and took two thrusting American divisions with them, had driven the Germans farther back along the Scheldt. To the 91st American Division fell Audenarde.

Foch's design had contemplated a double attack on either side of the great L-shaped bulge of the German front, in which three British armies and one French army should

strike at the western side of the L, while Gouraud's army and the Americans, Foch's right wing, drove in at the southern leg. What effects the first-named of these attacks produced has been narrated. It remains to examine the course of the right-wing Franco-American push, without which the First, Third, and Fourth British Armies, and the First French Army, could not have prosecuted their design. (That is to say, they would have encountered very much more resistance. Further, it is to be remarked that the steady pressure of Humbert and Mangin round the angle of the L was essential to the success of the design; and that the Franco-Belgian-British thrust in Belgium, though contingent on success at the centre, aided the main armies in exploiting that success to the uttermost.)

The earlier stages of the Gouraud-Pershing movement have been recorded. On 1st October, Gouraud was at Challerange, having pushed forward through the crater country of the Champagne battle-field and taken 13,000 prisoners and 300 guns. Pershing's Americans, at a slightly earlier date, were in possession of Montfauçon, on the eastern side of the Argonne (from which it had been proposed to pinch out the Germans by an advance on either side), and had penetrated some distance into the forest. But the advance of the Americans on the flank of the Argonne was very much hampered by enfilading fire from the wooded heights and ravines of the Argonne; and to silence the guns posted there the left of the American First Army had to fight its way forward through 9 miles of the most naturally-difficult country that the Germans held.

While the 1st American Corps did this severe and costly work, in which it sustained a high proportion of its losses through over-keenness and under-experience, the 5th and 3rd Corps worked their way forward on the side. Their difficulties of supply were hardly less formidable than those of tactics, and the progress of the division on the right of the forest was slowed down almost to that of those within it. This was the slowing down of Foch's right wing which provoked a good deal of criticism at the time, and was, indeed, extremely exasperating at a moment when a rapid advance would have been so advantageous. But the slowness was an inevitable consequence of want of experience, and could not have been avoided—unless another year had been spent in preparation. The whole point of the American attack was that it had been undertaken and urged by Pershing in full knowledge of the risks and disabilities, just as Haig selected to attack the Siegfried line in spite of the terrible consequences of failure.

It was the determination of Haig and Pershing to go on, in spite of all, which gave Foch confidence in his plan, and brought the war to an end in 1918 instead of 1919. Pershing's three-quarters of a million Americans were a threat never absent from Ludendorff's calculations, and obliged him always to detach divisions to watch them. The very fact that the Americans had to fight for every foot they advanced indicates the apprehension with which German Headquarters regarded their presence. In the first week of October the Americans made little or no progress in bursting their way from the positions in the forest to which their first impetus had carried them. Then, fortunately, some order having been brought in to the supply services, it became possible to apply the pinching device which had first been planned for the capture of the Argonne. On 9th October, after a two days' bitter struggle, the Americans (28th and 82nd Divisions) took Chatel, a dominating front on the eastern side of the forest. Meanwhile, Gouraud had begun his advance to the Aisne, and had edged his way up the western side. The Germans saw the threat, and, fearful of encroachment and loss of guns, withdrew. Thus was part of the plan accomplished, and the Americans, clear of the forest, came into touch with the Germans at Grandpré. General Pershing at this date gave the command of the First American Army to General Liggett, and himself went to organize the daily-arriving American troops into a Second American Army on the other side of the St. Mihiel salient, where they were a component of that threat to Metz of which Ludendorff was continually in fear, and concerning which Foch, in whose plans the aim there did not mature

for some time yet to come, deceived him.

The American progress east of the Argonne, nevertheless, continued slow, and caused Foch some perturbation, while it seems to have exercised an encouraging effect on Ludendorff, who, hardening his heart about the middle of October, since his retreat had not been paralysed but had been orderly, suggested to the Government a war of endurance. But while he was still endeavouring to bring it round to this view the Battle of the Selle befell him, and the First American Army at last came up into the Kriemhilde line.

The battle began for the forward positions of the Kriemhilde line on 14th October, when, from Grandpré to the Meuse, Gouraud and Liggett attacked in concert. Grandpré fell to the Americans on the 16th, and Vouziers to Gouraud, who this day crossed the Aisne. For three days more the Americans hammered at the Kriemhilde line, making not a great deal of impression, but never letting go, and forcing the Germans to put in division after division, including one of the Guards, to keep the attackers out. They did not succeed, and the Americans pierced the position at its centre on the 18th–19th October, a day before Haig's divisions had taken the line of the Selle. Ludendorff's promise of a successful withdrawal had rested on holding back the double thrust on either side of his centre—Haig on the Selle, the Gouraud-Liggett combination from the vital railway. Both props had given way, and on 26th October Ludendorff's resignation was accepted.

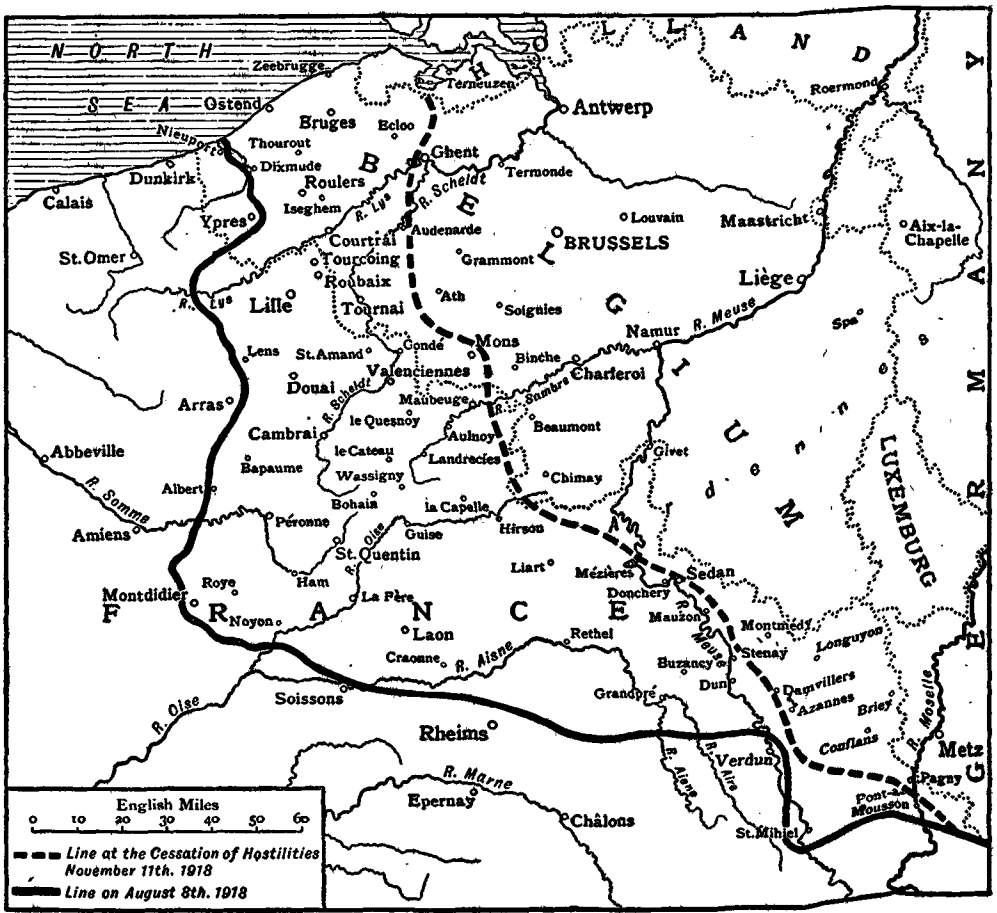
Foch's plan underwent no modifications; it was elastic enough to conform to new conditions, as well as to stretch round unexpected difficulties. The German armies had now to get back to the Meuse through a narrowing door. Foch ordered the Belgian-French-American forces on the Scheldt to cross the river above Audenarde in order to assist Haig in his advance towards Maubeuge, Mons, and Namur, while Gouraud and Liggett pressed onwards to Mézières and Sedan to shut the way to the south, and Humbert and Mangin still gripped the retreating Germans about Laon in the middle. The Gouraud-Liggett wing, in this final advance, may be followed first. On 1st November the French and Americans attacked on either side of the Forest of Bourgogne, into which the Argonne melts on the north. Gouraud seized the heights opposite Vouziers, and threatened the line of the Aisne towards the Meuse-Aisne Canal. The Americans, with new divisions as eager for fight as any that had fought hand to hand for the Argonne, attacked on the Meuse valley, and one corps, breaking clean through the damaged Kriemhilde defences, went forward 5 miles at a bound. The Germans began to break and crumble here as before Haig's blows; and for the same reason, that they were opposed to troops who, despite all that they had done and endured, still wanted to fight, while the German infantry had had enough.

On 2nd November the Americans captured Buzancy and spread round east of the Bourgogne Forest, while Gouraud threatened to surround it from the west. The Germans left it hastily; and that American eagerness which had been so costly hitherto now served the Americans well, for they plunged forward even in the darkness, giving the Germans no time to reorganize, and one division (2nd American) passing straight through their lines. With nothing to beat, the Americans, making up for some past delays, rushed up their long-range guns and shelled the railway at Longuyon and Montmédy. On 3rd November Gouraud and Liggett joined hands north of the Bourgogne Forest, and Gouraud now was able to threaten the Brunnhilde section of the Hindenburg line in Champagne by pushing forward east of it beyond Attigny with the American troops who had got through the Kriemhilde section. On 4th November, by seizing the southern portion of the Aisne-Meuse Canal (which runs from Attigny to Sedan), he manœuvred the Germans out of their Brunnhilde line by the threat of his advance to Mézières. The next day the Americans leapt forward another 6 miles, and on the day that Gouraud entered Rethel an American division reached Sedan.

Thus one goal of Foch's right wing had been reached, and not very much behind

schedule time. Gouraud reached his point later, because he was delayed by the Brunnhilde line defenders, who had suffered no preliminary beating. Mézières was attained on the night of 10th November. Meanwhile, the Americans, settling down in front of Sedan, pushed their right wing eastwards dorff, from the St. Mihiel front towards Briey and Metz.

It remains but to speak of the co-ordinated movement of the rest of the armies which had been manœuvred under Foch's plan. The difficulties of their advance over broken communications had been great; those of




Map showing approximately the Allied Line on 8th August, 1918, and on Armistice Day, 11th November, 1918

and crossed the Meuse. Thereafter three of Gouraud's corps joined with the American army to lay hands on the wooded heights of the Meuse between Sedan and Dun. When the Armistice came into effect on 11th November the Franco-American line was well across the Meuse, and within 6 miles of Montmédy. The Second American Army had at that date begun the advance, which had been prematurely anticipated by Ludendorff's order to withdraw. The retreat of the Germans on their congested roads of retreat began to accumulate, and were made infernal by the relentless bombing directed from the unsubdued aeroplanes of the Allies. On 5th November, Haig had left the Mormal Forest, the difficulties of which had disappeared almost mysteriously in the changed aspect of the times; and by the 8th the Fourth Army was at Avesnes. On the same day, anticipating the heavy attack

which the Allies had planned on the whole of the Scheldt line, the Germans disappeared from the river, the British, French, and Americans in hot pursuit. Plumer took Tournai, and Birdwood occupied Renain. On the 9th the Guards Division and the 62nd Division occupied the fortress of Maubeuge, which had been in August, 1914, the projected rendezvous of the British Expeditionary Force; and on 11th November, a few hours before the Armistice came into being, the Canadians, who had immortalized Passchendaele, re-entered Mons, from which the British retreat had begun.

The terms of the Armistice reflected with certainty the truth that the German army, despite its protestations, then and thereafter, was beaten, though it is not to be denied that, apart from the contrasted spirit of the men composing the opposed forces, the Allies would have found enormous difficulties in bringing up the means with which to annihilate the still-working German machine. The next blow, already in preparation, would have been concerted by Gouraud, and the First and Second American Armies towards the north of Metz, while yet another thrust would have been made by divisions which Foch could well have spared to the south of the fortress. It is profitless to discuss the period in which the blows contemplated would have been effective, or the cost, which would have been great, in men; the certainty is that the task would have been accomplished, and that Germany, as a nation would have shrunk—did shrink—from the bloodshed, before the Allies. Since 15th July, when Foch sent Mangin and Dégoutte to the attack between the Marne and the Aisne, the French had taken 140,000 prisoners, the British 188,000, the Americans 44,000, the Belgians 14,000; and nearly 7000 guns had been captured. Add to these the enemy's losses in killed and wounded, and it will be seen that neither Germany nor the German armies could bear more.

The terms of the Armistice demanded, in addition to evacuation of territory, an additional 5000 guns, besides 30,000 machine-guns, 3000 trench mortars, and 2000 aeroplanes. The naval surrenders included 6 battle-cruisers, 10 battleships, 8 light cruisers, 50 destroyers, and all the submarines. A zone of territory on the Rhine was to be occupied by the Allies. All German troops were to be withdrawn from other territory than that of the Central Powers, and the treaties of Bucharest and Brest-Litovsk were declared null and void.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### ITALY'S SHARE IN THE WAR

Italy's intervention in the war was the outcome of the feelings of the Italian people that right was on the side of the Allies; and in the interval, before the declaration of war was made against Austria-Hungary, Italian feeling was steadily pushing its Government towards this decision. But till the time of that declaration the promptings of Italian diplomacy were more slowly feeling a way to the same course of action. On 25th July, 1914, two days after Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, a meeting was held between the Italian Prime Minister, Signor Salandra, the Foreign Minister, Marchese di San Giuliano, and the German Ambassador, Herr von Flotow, in which the Italian Ministers pointed out that Austria had no right to take such a step without previous agreement with her allies, of whom Italy was one. Subsequently Italy made her position clearer by declaring that if she did not receive adequate "compensation" for Austria's disturbance of the Balkans the Triple Alliance would be irreparably broken—in other words, that she was absolved from joining Austria-Hungary and Germany in the war, and that her neutrality was provisional. On 4th August Italy published a declaration of

neutrality, pointing out that the conditions which would have compelled Italy to take up arms with Germany and Austria had not been fulfilled. This declaration was of enormous service to the Allies, because it freed France from the obligation to protect her south-eastern frontier, and relieved both Great Britain and France from the apprehension of a dangerous situation in the Mediterranean. The choice was in the highest degree creditable to Italy and to Italian diplomacy. Two things determined it: the first, that neither Government nor country could join hands with Germany and Austria; the second, the conviction which dawned in the minds of a few that now was the time to complete Italian unity.[1]

A number of " conversations " took place between the representatives of the quondam Triple Alliance with the purpose of shaking Italy's determination, and of preventing her from converting her standpoint of neutrality into one of belligerency. In general, the attitude of Austria, as represented successively by Count Berchtold and Baron Burian, may be said to have assumed the form of purchasing Italian neutrality by the offer of the smallest amount of compensation which Italy would accept. This something, or this " parecchio ", as it was styled by Signor Giolitti, the leader of the " Neutralists ", and a most powerful force in Italian politics, was rejected by Baron Sonnino, who had become Foreign Minister after the death of the Marchese di San Giuliano in October, 1914. Prince von Bülow, who replaced Herr von Flotow as German Ambassador in Rome, struggled hard to formulate an accommodation between the Italian and the Austrian views, and when his efforts were seconded by the Neutralists it seemed for a time that he would succeed, and that Italy would remain neutral. But when the resignation of Signor Salandra gave colour to this supposition, the whole of the country rose in protest against any such arrangement. Signor Salandra was recalled, and on 20th May the will of the country was recorded by the solemn vote of Chamber and Senate. On 23rd May, 1915, Italy declared war against Austria-Hungary. On the same day Austria, who could by no means have been prepared for the decision, attacked the Italian outposts in the Carnic Alps. It is important to remember that Italy's declaration of war against Austria was delivered at a moment when the hopes of the Allies had received a considerable diminution by the success of von Mackensen in rescuing the Austria-Hungarian armies from their plight in Galicia, and in setting in motion that great military movement which resulted in the clearance of Galicia and Volhynia, the capture of Warsaw, and the immobilization of the Russian armies commanded by the Grand Duke Nicholas.

At the time of Italy's declaration of war, she had neither enough guns nor machine-guns for her forces; she was as badly off as Great Britain had been for heavy guns; for there was no modern heavy artillery except in the fortresses; and Italy was very badly equipped industrially for making them for herself, because coal and iron had to be imported, and blast furnaces were few. During the three years' fighting there were never enough guns and never abundance of shells.

The strategic problem which Italy had to face was also a serious one. Into the plains of Italy runs the rocky wedge of the Trentino which was held by Austria, and an enemy advance from which could cut off a wide stretch of territory lying to the east of it, the plains of Venetia and Friuli. The frontier which Italy had to defend—to be styled rather than as the frontier across which she could advance—was more than 480 miles in length. It was divisable into three sectors: the Trentino salient; the barrier of the Dolomites and the Carnic Alps, north-east of it; and the so-called Isonzo front, from Pontebba to the Adriatic. The Trentino offered possibilities to Austria for an invasion, though it is to be noted that von Falkenhayn and the German Head-quarters Staff set their faces against such an undertaking, and were perturbed when, eventually, the Austrian Commander-in-Chief, General Conrad von Hoetzendorff, attempted it with only a single line of railway to supply his troops. But it offered no possibilities to

[1] *Italy's Part in the War*, by W. K. M'Clure. (Bemporad: Florence.)

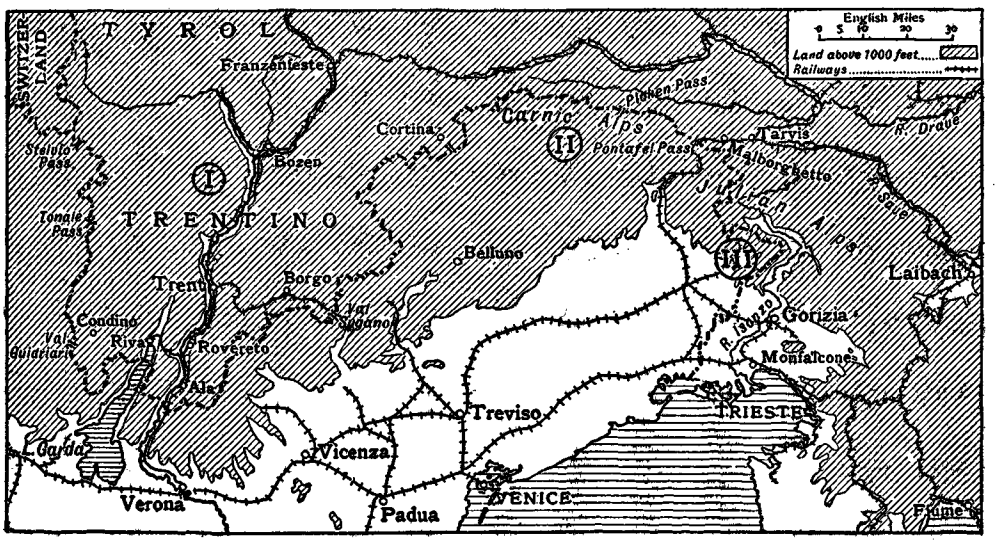
*Drawn by F. Matania*

INCIDENT DURING THE ITALIAN RETREAT IN OCTOBER, 1917

Italian artillerymen pitching their gun over a mountain precipice to prevent it falling into the hands of the advancing Austrians

Italy for a successful attack. The flanks were well protected by mountains traversed only by passes impracticable to a modern army. The Cadore and Carnic Alps to the north-east of it were too difficult for either side to attempt large-scale operations in them. The Isonzo, or eastern front, was the only one which Italy had any prospect of piercing. From Pontebba to the Isonzo valley mountains still blocked the way, and the upper and middle reaches of the river flow through mountainous country ill provided with roads. absorbed a proportion of the scanty supply of guns. Among the first operations of the Italians were those of seizing the entrances to three of the passes, the Stelvio, Tonale, and Guidriari, on the east side of the Trentino wedge, and of blocking those on the western side. They occupied Cortina during the last week in May, 1915, as well as the heights dominating the Monte Croce Pass.

The foregoing were defensive measures. The offensive operations proceeded in an unhasting way. They were not of a kind




The Three Theatres of War on the Austro-Italian Frontier

I, Trentino. II, Carnic Alps. III, Isonzo Front.

There was but one gap—the 20-mile opening on the Lower Isonzo—from Cormons to the Adriatic, where the Italian and Austro-Hungarian armies could meet on equal terms: and this gap offered little depth before furnishing its own topographical difficulties. Ten miles from the frontier-line rose the bleak Carso, commanding at Gorizia the key to the plains which led to Laibach and Agram. North of Gorizia rose the Bainsizza plateau. It was this sector that General Cadorna elected to attack while holding the outlets of the Trentino, a hostile irruption from which would have cut his communications. The Trentino salient had always to be watched; it occupied the efforts of a large number of picked soldiers, and which popular expectation had looked for. Baron Sonnino had concluded with Sir Edward Grey (with the approval of M. Cambon, and M. Sazonoff) a Secret Treaty which gave to Italy considerable concessions in the Mediterranean and Adriatic littorals; and the treaty was subsequently the cause of a great deal of recrimination, as well as of difficulties, with Austria's Slav races. The arrangement, which was rather of the nature of an old-style diplomatic bargain, was looked upon with some dubiety among the foreign offices of the Allies, but was assented to because it was believed that Italy's interposition at this juncture would be decisive. It did not prove so. During June and July General Cadorna deployed the Italian Third

Army on the right bank of the Isonzo. Italian troops crossed the river and secured bridge-heads at Caporetto (the scene of subsequent Italian disasters in 1917), Plava, Castelnuovo, Gradisca, and Monfalcone, on the coast.

Along this 30-mile front the Austrian defences proved strong enough to hold up any immediate Italian advance. The positions had been fortified with great skill, and the southern extremity of the line was buttressed by the Carso plateau. The Italians gained a footing on it in July, but its complete subjugation was the necessary preliminary to any Italian advance into the Istrian plain, or of an attack on Gorizia, the pivot of the Isonzo defences from the south. The Italian attempts to rush these strong positions proved abortive, and thenceforward, when the cost of assaulting them had proved to be prohibitive, the warfare settled down, as on the Western Front, to siege operations.

The rest of the year, till an early winter closed down the fighting, was occupied by give-and-take operations in which the Italian offensive, though continually encouraged by slight gains in the Trentino salient and on the Isonzo front, could boast no greater achievement than those already recorded, together with the useful service of occupying the attention of a considerable proportion of the Austro-Hungarian armies.

It is to be noted that on the Isonzo, or eastern front, a large proportion of these were Serbo-Croats, or Jugo-Slavs, who had been persuaded to the view that they were fighting against the Italians in defence of their national territory. The failure of Italy to accomplish more in this first year was in the greatest degree to be attributed to her lack of guns and shells; something more is to be attributed to the anomalous position in which she stood by not having declared war against Germany, a fact to be laid to the door of the paradoxical politics of the country, some of whose politicians did not want the war at all. Others, such as the Socialists, protested against the extension of Italy's liabilities by the declaration of war against Bulgaria (19th October).

In 1916 the Italians' share in the war took on an altogether different complexion. They were, in the first place, attacked by the Austrians, and having repelled the attack, assumed the offensive in their turn, and by the autumn stood east of Gorizia and masters at last of the Carso. No praise can be too high for the devotion, ability, and ingenuity with which the Italians fought in the heights of the Trentino. They worked on the edge of avalanches; their supplies were brought on wire cables; their guns were dragged with incredible labour to the heights; their fighting was often done with the thermometer below zero. It was from the wedge-shaped Trentino that General Conrad von Hoetzendorff designed to launch an attack that would cut the Italian communications, inhibit an offensive which General Cadorna was preparing on the Isonzo, and, if completely successful, find a way to the Venetian plains. The plan found no favour at German Head-quarters, and was a disagreeable surprise to the Chief of the General Staff, von Falkenhayn, who tried to deter Count Conrad von Hoetzendorff from its prosecution by finally demanding the heaviest Austrian artillery for use on the Meuse.[1] All remonstrance, however, proved in vain; and on the 14th of May the Austrian General Staff informed German Head-quarters that, weather permitting, they intended to launch an attack on the Tyrol front from the Adige to the Sugana valley. On the next day the attack, for which the troops had been ready for six weeks, but had been detained by snow, began.

The Austro-Hungarian command had in the Trentino 18 divisions of first-class troops, including many trained to mountain warfare; and other units in reserve. This army was supplied with 2000 guns, half of them of not less than medium calibre; with 20 batteries of 12-inch guns, two to a battery; four 15-inch guns, and two of the monster Skoda mortars of 16½ inch. It is plain that General von Hoetzendorff contemplated the possibility of some such smashing advance as Mackensen had made in Galicia. The conditions, however, were very different, and the Italian soldiery were at this period inspired by the greatest enthusiasm. There was no question of

[1] *Von Falkenhayn's Memoirs* (Hutchinson, 1919).

finding their *moral* sapped. The position of the Italian front in the Trentino was, nevertheless, not good. It cut across the V-shaped Trentino in a concave loop, of which roughly one extremity rested on the Val Lagarina, and the other on the Val Sugana. The Austrians could not force their way directly along these main valleys; their effort was directed, firstly, at pressing the middle of the loop backwards so as to make it sag more, and, secondly, at cutting through the loop where it rested on the valleys so as to outflank them.

General Brusati was in command of the Italian troops, but when it became clear that the Austrians intended a drive on a great scale, he was replaced in the command of the First Italian Army by General Pecori-Giraldi, to whom was given the task of strengthening the flanks at the Val Lagarina and the Val Sugana. Before the centre could also be strengthened the Austrian attack began—with a bombardment (14th May) over a 30-mile front, and with the heavy guns playing on the communications. The Italian line, under this compulsion of gun-fire, moved back at its centre, but held resolutely on the strengthened flanks at Zugna and Borgo. On the 15th and 16th the Austrians began to move forward by (*a*) Rovereto and the Vall'arsa to Chiese and Schio; (*b*) from the Folgaria plateau down the Astico valley to Arsiero; (*c*) from the Lavarone plateau down the Val d'Assa to Asiago. On the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, fighting was continuous. The ridge at Zugna had to be given up, and the whole of the middle of the loop was pushed back till it ran from the Coni Zugna over the Pasubio *massif*, and thence, still unstable, north of the Val Posina and the Setti Comuni table-land to the Val Sugana. General Cadorna now ordered the centre of the line to be drawn right back from the costly and untenable positions which it was striving to hold, and after a four days' fighting retreat it was south of Asiago, and had been converted from a single loop into a double one, with the Pasubio *massif* at the junction. The right-hand (eastern) loop tipped up northwards after crossing the Val d'Assa till it reached the Val Sugana.

25th May was a critical day: the centre had sunk back almost as far as it was safe to withdraw it; and the Austrians now made their first attempt to pierce the sagging line where it hung by its pegs on the flanks. They had attacked at Coni Zugna and Pasubio, and had pushed into the smaller left-hand loop as far as Chiese, so that if they got a little farther they could take Pasubio flank and rear. If, secondly, they got through the Buole Pass, then Coni Zugna must similarly go, and on the west a way would be opened to the plains. In the attempts to achieve these advances the Austrians lavished men. At the same time they pressed the right-hand loop hard, and thus though, on its eastern extremity, it had been withdrawn lower down the Val Sugana to a more defensible position, it was hard beset, while the sector next to it, nearer to the centre, had to struggle night and day to keep its feet on the Setti Comuni table-land. It was pushed back, in spite of all its efforts for four days, the 25th to the 28th inclusive.

On the 30th the struggle for the triple objective of the Coni Zugna, the Buole Pass, and for Pasubio, culminated. The Austrians spent 7000 men in the attempt on the pass and failed, and though they did not relinquish their efforts to shell the Italians from their rocky trenches on Pasubio, and attacked them unceasingly from three sides, the incessant small expenditure was useless, when the large effort had failed. On the same day as the western attack on the Buole Pass, a corresponding attack was made on the east. The Italians had two days before (28th) been forced back to the southern rim of the table-land of the Setti Comuni. On the 30th Monte Cimone, dominating Arsiero (which, with Asiago, had been abandoned), was taken, and the Austrians assaulted the ridge standing between them and the plains. On 1st June an Austrian Army Order announced that only one mountain intervened between their troops and the Venetian plain, and still their advance had not been arrested.

But at this date the worst of the danger was well over, for the reinforcement of the Fifth Army, which had been organized for action on the Isonzo front by Cadorna, but

which he had called up when the full intention of the Austrian High Command was revealed, was now coming up and would shortly be in a position for counter-attack; and preparations began for it on 2nd June. Cadorna did not believe that the enemy could break through his line, and rightly took into consideration the fact that since the Austrian blow had failed at the time of its greatest momentum in the first fortnight, it could never again raise a sufficient head of power while served only by the single line of railway supporting it. Consequently, for another fortnight, he contented himself with sustaining their continued assaults, and on 15th, 16th, and 17th June the last attack on the southern rim of the Setti Comuni table-land flickered out, while Cadorna lighted a new flame with his own counter-attack. But this was not pushed very vigorously for a strategic reason.

The Italian Commander-in-Chief had other designs for the locality of the blow which he proposed to strike at the enemy, and was not to be moved from his own plan of an attack on the Isonzo front by any prospect of capturing men or guns in the difficult country of the Trentino mountains. The roads by which his army could have advanced were at least as difficult for him as for the better-armed retreating Austrians, and he preferred the appearance of a lively activity on their front while they sullenly retreated—an army *hors de combat* in the Trentino valleys—to a wasteful attempt to harry them. Their absence from any theatre of war was a useful asset to the Allies, and Russia, by the agency of Brussiloff's attack in Galicia, turned it to good account. Cadorna turned to the renewal of his preparations to strike on the eastern front. By the first week in August he was ready.

The Austro-Hungarian front which he attacked was commanded by General Boroviec (Fifth Austro-Hungarian Army), whose command extended from the Adriatic to Tolmino, 25 miles north of Gorizia, where it linked with General Rohr's Tenth Army. Gorizia was the centre of the attacked position. The first assault of the Italian Third Army was a feint attack towards Monfalcone, as if to turn the Carso block. The real attack, heralded by a searching and heavy bombardment on 6th August, was directed at the Sabotino block and the San Michele height, the northern pillar of the Carso. Ten divisions took part in it; and the excellent artillery preparation simplified the capture of the Austrian first lines. A column under Colonel Badoglio carried the defences of Oslavia, and the whole position of the Sabotino height followed. In the open country below it the trenches between Podgora and the Isonzo were overrun. The right wing of the attack did equally well, breaking through the trench defences of Monte San Michele, and carrying another line southwards to San Martino. Finally, by a very dashing development of the feint attack of two days before, a Bersaglieri cyclist-battalion got a footing on the heights above Monfalcone, and stayed there. With the Sabotino outlier and Monte San Michele in their hands the Italians commanded Gorizia. But though they could deny it to the enemy, there were three days of close and bloody fighting to be done in clearing its subsidiary defences. It was not till 10th August that the Duc d'Aosta was able to ride into the town at the head of his Italian Third Army.

The capture of Gorizia was a great feat, and one which exhibited the Italian military power at its best. It had the moral effect of converting Italy to a complete belief in the war, and it was a great personal triumph for General Cadorna, whose difficulties, political as well as military, had been extreme. He lost no time in following up his success; and the energy with which the Austrians were able to counter-attack was a token of the extent to which at this period of the war they had rallied their Croatian and Bosnian subjects to their cause. Cadorna's task was only begun. The Austrians still held strong mountainous positions from Monte San Gabriele to San Marco, east of Gorizia, and could enfilade any Italian advance towards them by means of their artillery on the Bainsizza plateau to the north. South of Gorizia the task of making a way across the honey-combed, waterless Carso, with its elaborate fortifications, was hardly less arduous. By the 11th the

northern end of the Gorizian section of the Carso was secured, and on that day the Italians, crossing the deep gash of the Vallone, carried the height of Nod Logem beyond it. They continued to push forward as far as Monte Pecinka, which they reached by the middle of August, when the movement, regarded as a whole, concluded. It had captured since 4th August 19,000 prisoners, 30 big guns, 63 trench mortars, and 92 machine-guns.

Autumn and the approach of winter did not, as in the preceding year, suspend active operations. From mid-August to mid-September the reduction of the Carso positions proceeded steadily; it would have progressed a great deal faster had Cadorna been well supplied with heavy artillery, and an ample reserve of shells. He had neither. Nevertheless, the San Grado position, north-east, was taken, enabling the Italians to steal down in to the plain which it overlooked towards the Vipacco River, the line of which was turned by a surprise attack on 10th October. This was the prelude to a more considerable attack on the northern part of the Carso at the beginning of November, which, in conjunction with an attack from the Vipacco sector, cleared eventually all the minor heights of the Carso down to that river as far as Height 126. The additions to the number of prisoners in the autumn and early winter fighting amounted to 16,000 men, a number almost as great as that taken in the opening phases of Cadorna's most able counter-thrust. When the dimensions of the resources, the difficulties of the positions assailed, and the resistance of the enemy infantry are taken into account, the magnitude of the success appears, and was, very great.

Two events had great influence on the course of the campaign in 1917, the first that Italy declared war on Germany on 28th August, a step openly approved by all except the Socialist party; the second, the Russian Revolution, which freed Austria-Hungary from many anxieties on the Galician front. These had been further lessened by the collapse of Roumania, and there seemed no reason why the whole weight of the Austro-Hungarian military power should not fall on the Italians. While Russia had kept Austria engaged, General Cadorna had been able to hold the forces of General von Hoetzendorff on the one flank, while striking at General Boroviec on the other. But now only two plans, neither very good, were open. The first was to strike while there was yet time, with all the weight which Italy could compass, in the plain which led from Gorizia to Laibach; the other was to withdraw from the awkward positions on the Carso and act on the defensive. The first plan could only have been assured of success if General Cadorna had been in possession of a much larger weight of artillery; the second plan was desirable politically because of its influence on the races in the south-east of Austria, whose loyalty to the Hapsburgs was doubtful, and whom it was hoped might be induced to revolt against their masters. The hope would have been better founded had the intentions of Italy with regard to the eastern coast of the Adriatic been less ambiguous.

In the upshot neither plan was adopted; but a middle course of a limited offensive was taken. This began in May with an attempt to secure command of the roads leading to Trieste.

General Cadorna's plan was ingenious. He began by a heavily-prepared attack on the Austrian positions north of Gorizia covering the Bainsizza plateau. He attacked for five days, methodically capturing Monte Kuk, Monte Vodice, and securing a good bridge-head at Bodrez. The operations, which extended over a considerable front, captured 6000 prisoners. Having thus drawn the attention of the Austrians to this northern wing of his attack, Cadorna put the second part into execution, sending the Third Army into action on a wide front south of Gorizia from Faitihrib to the coast. The preliminary bombardment was shortened to a violent ten hours to impart surprise to the movement; and British monitors[1] bombarded the Monfalcone sector from the sea. The Third Army took 9000 prisoners in the first advance and 1000 on the second day. The forward movement was resumed on the 25th, and the Italian 7th Army Corps, by storming the

[1] Ten British batteries ("heavies") reinforced the Italian field artillery.

heights between Medeazza and Flondar, opened the way for the subjugation of the Hermada block which dominated the coast road to Trieste. But, though the Italians, by hard fighting, won ground and another 5000 prisoners, they could not move fast enough to win a way to their goal before the Austrian reserves were thrown into the counter-attack. They got no farther than Medeazza, from which they threatened to turn the Hermada heights, and Medeazza they could not keep in its entirety. They kept the ground won in the northern attack at the foot of the Bainsizza plateau, and counted 24,000 prisoners from first to last; but their own losses, in an enterprise which towards the end became the usual give-and-take fighting, could not have been greatly inferior to those of the enemy. The total casualty list of the Italians, including killed and missing, was 130,000. That of the Austrians may have been about the same; they had the preliminary advantage of defending well-armoured and well-gunned positions.

There were in June, 1917, a few actions in the Trentino, small but costly in proportion to the numbers engaged. The Austrian retreat after von Hoetzendorff's failure had not abandoned all the good or threatening positions, one of which, between the Val Brenta and the Vall'arsa, would be useful in any renewed attack on Asiago. This position, part of which rested on Monte Ortigara, was assailed on 18th June by order of the local Italian commander. The height was captured; the Alpini who took it—and with it the Austrian battalion defending it—hung on to their gains for a fortnight, and then were shelled nearly to annihilation before being driven out by a counter-attack. It was an episode which reflected the highest credit on the bravery of the Italian soldiers, but very little on the general in command. This incident was one of several which led to the enlargement of dissatisfaction among the rank and file. A symptom of this dissatisfaction revealed itself in a refusal of a newly-arrived infantry brigade in the Faitihrib-Hermada sector to fight. If that is an exaggeration of their attitude it is only a slight one.

The incident made very little difference to the tenacity with which other soldiers of the Third Army, notably the Grenadier Brigade, resisted the Austrian counter-attacks during June. But it was a disagreeable symptom of a new spirit in the Italian army; and it might have been better if the Commander-in-Chief, General Cadorna, had noted it, and taken measures earlier to counteract it. The feeling was, in part, the war weariness which fell on all the belligerents; it was in part due to political causes—the conflict between those who dreamt of a Greater Italy dominating the Adriatic, or those who, like the Socialists, denounced the war altogether, or those who, steering a middle course, designed to fish in troubled waters. It is certain that the seeds of disaffection began to ripen in some sections of the Italian armies in the summer, and they were ripe for gathering in the autumn. At any rate, that is what von Falkenhayn and Ludendorff, who knew the circumstances in which the great German-Austrian attack was loosed in October, have implied.

Before this attack took place General Cadorna adopted a way of his own of stiffening his troops by delivering yet another attack on the main Austrian front. This attack had been considered at a Paris Conference (25th July), and Cadorna had asked for it a considerable reinforcement of guns and munitions—for lack of which the May-June attack had been suspended. Generals Haig and Pétain at that time had their own hands full, and could not accede to any weakening of their resources till after the Franco-British campaigning season. That would have been too late for Cadorna in Italy; and the half measure of a limited offensive was decided on. This began on 18th August with a bombardment from Tolmino to the sea, and differed in plan from its predecessors. Cadorna's intention being of no greater subtlety than that of ramming in his reserves wherever the first attacks should disclose enemy weakness. The infantry followed the bombardment on 19th August, and the Austrians, apparently, had expected the heaviest weight of assault to fall on the Carso and on the Hermada front, since that was the most obvious way to

Trieste. The Italians did, indeed, make progress in both these sectors, and in so doing confirmed the Austrian surmise. The Third Army reached the line at Medeazza, which they had been unable to hold in June, and once again the heights of Hermada were pounded by British monitors and Italian siege-guns on pontoons. On the Carso, near Selo, the Italian Grenadiers wiped out the 12th Austrian Division; and on the more northerly terraces of the Carso, above the Vipacco River, some little progress was made against very dense enemy resistance.

But in the less numerously defended sectors north of Gorizia, the long line of searching assault had found a weak spot near the Plava bridge-head. The Italians seized the valley which divided Monte Kuk from the Bainsizza plateau, and entirely deceived the defenders as to the points where it was intended to cross the Isonzo. Those selected were the least obvious ones, and unlikely crossings were effected by letting down ropes and swarming across. Thus, in the morning mists of the 19th, a considerable force was on the farther side of the river at Jelenik, ready to seize the first line of Austrian trenches. Later in the day, while the second lines were delaying further advance by machine-gun fire, two Bersaglieri brigades dashed across farther north towards Bodrez, and got round the northern rim of the Bainsizza plateau above Vrh. Here was the real break, and the Italians, coming down north from Vrh, outflanked the Austrians at Jelenik, and then put one northern spur of the Bainsizza plateau into Italian possession.

A more important northern spur, divided nominally into the Kal and Lom plateaux, commands Santa Lucia and the bridge-head at Tolmino. The Italians made some headway over the difficult country, but did not pursue the enterprise; it might have been a useful insurance if they had done so. They pursued, instead, their gains southwards and eastwards over the main Bainsizza plateau; and to them fell many conspicuous gains. From Monte Kuk and Vodice they went to conquer Monte Kobelik, and on 24th August, took Monte Santo, its garrison and gun caverns, which they had hammered fruitlessly so long. This was the most heartening moment of their drive, for henceforth their difficulties increased with every step. The plateau had no roads by which they could cross it; they must build them, and in the meantime must manhandle every piece of artillery with ropes. The advance reached its limit by 27th August at Volnik, a hill 2 miles from the Chiapovono valley, where the Austrians were well prepared to hold up an attack till their guns could be removed.

Thenceforward the last offensive of General Cadorna resolved itself into very capable, very methodical attempts to reduce the dominant heights abutting on the entrance to the Gorizia plain and dominating the Gorizian Carso. On the Southern Carso the struggle for positions went on during the larger part of September, and late in the month the Italians improved their line in the south-eastern corner of the Bainsizza plateau; but the autumn campaign proper ceased by the second week of September with General Cadorna's publication of a schedule of the Italian gains, which comprised upwards of 30,000 prisoners and 140 guns, of which 80 were guns of position.

This was good work, and in ordinary circumstances would have been regarded as a most valuable contribution to the common cause of the Allies. But the operations had been very costly; they had carried no decision with them; and in the revival of the forces and resources of the Central Powers they had become perilous. Their cost in casualties, little short of 150,000, added to those which had been sustained in the earlier campaigns of the year, invited counter-attack, if the Central Powers could undertake it. Austria-Hungary, kept together only by fear, and always in danger of the revolt of some of her component races, had generally shown itself incapable of any sustained counter-attack. But German Head-quarters, which had so pointedly refused countenance to Count von Hoetzendorff's Trentino campaign in 1916, were impelled, partly by military and partly by political reasons, to give assistance in 1917. They chose the time when the Italian armies were temporarily exhausted; they chose the place for

attack, which was not where Cadorna was well placed either to resist or to retire slowly, but where there was a weakness in the line; and they chose the method of attack.

The weakness in Cadorna's line was above and about the Tolmino bridge-head at the north of the unconquered Kal and Lom spurs of the Bainsizza plateau. His Third Army, which was his best, was deeply sunk in the Gorizia-Carso sector. His Second Army held a long thin line from the Bainsizza plateau northwards, but had never conquered the Tolmino bridge-head, which was a position of great natural strength, because here the river makes a right-angled turn so that it encloses a hilly triangular tract filled by the Santa Lucia and Santa Maria hills. It would have been a costly position to take, and the Italians, though expending several attacks on it, had never made a serious attempt on it. The German strategists saw both its strength and the joint in the Italian defences which it formed. They began to assemble divisions to attack it, before Haig, on the Franco-British front, had ceased attacking Passchendaele. The Italians could not remain ignorant of the concentration, but did not apprehend an overpowering danger, though they were a little dubious about their artillery strength. What should have given greater cause for dubiety was the *moral* of certain units of the Italian Second Army. They had been undermined by propaganda, and General Cadorna was not wholly unaware of this peril from within. In the second place, in meeting the attack of 10 picked German divisions under General von Below, which had all the experience of the Western Front behind them, together with all the prestige, efficiency, and ingenuity of the German military method, the Italian troops were exposed to something of which they had no conception.

The attack was pushed after six days' registering fire, and after a violent bombardment of the most searching kind on the night of 23rd–24th October, from Plezzo to below Tolmino. It was pushed in a way, afterwards to become notorious, which obviated any loss of direction through a fog by sending forward men closely packed in deep formations, so that the way could not be lost. The Italian command had not expected that an attack could be made in such conditions; and their own guns were impotent for counter-battery work. The enemy columns were on them with all the impact of surprise; and these columns were driven into the Italian positions like nails, and without any regard to the losses sustained by the attackers. The 4th Corps of the Second Italian Army, which was not an experienced one, was cut up; its artillery was out of action almost from the first, partly owing to the surprise, partly owing to incapacity to grasp the situation on the part of its commander. At the northernmost positions the Austro-German drive was temporarily held; on the remaining front of the 4th Corps down to Vodil, north-west of Tolmino, most serious gaps were made and widened. Below the 4th Corps, covering Tolmino, was part of the 7th Corps and the 27th, from Santa Lucia to the Avscek valley. This front the Austro-Germans assailed from the Tolmino bridge-head, breaking through the first lines in the mist as they had done farther north, and storming the height of Globocak.

Here, at any rate, there was no panic and no faltering. Globocak was retaken by a Bersaglieri brigade (5th, General Boriani); and farther south, also on the Bainsizza spurs, the Italian line, where attacked, either held or retired in good order. It seemed to General Cadorna, when the reports reached him, as if no more than a local reverse had been sustained, though General Capello, the man on the spot,[1] thought otherwise, and advised a general withdrawal of the line. The Germans had, in effect, pierced the Italian first line and second line at Caporetto and at Vodil Vrh, and were surging forward from the Tolmino bridge-head. Moreover, they were only just beginning, and it did not matter that they were held up here and there. They were adopting in a crude form the method enjoined on German attacking units in the later Cambrai-St. Quentin battle of 1918, namely, to act independently, pushing any advantage for

[1] He had, unfortunately, returned from sick leave only on the eve of the battle.

REAR-ADMIRAL SIR R. J. KEYES, K.C.B.

*From a photograph by Russell & Sons*

COMMODORE SIR Y. TYRWHITT, K.C.B.

*From a photograph by Heath, Plymouth*

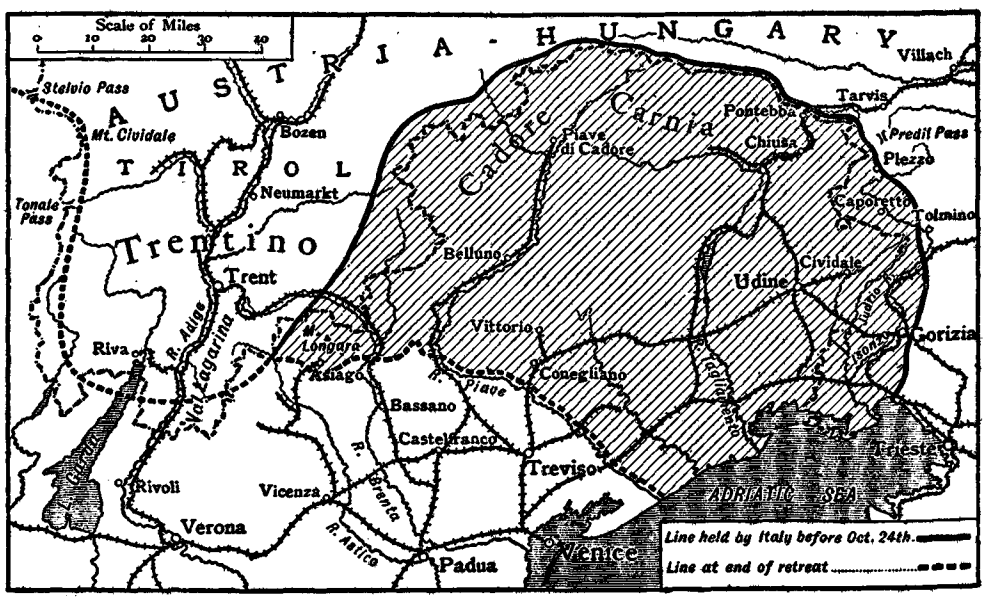
ADMIRAL SIMS, UNITED STATES NAVY

*From a photograph by Savory & Co.*

GENERAL PERSHING, COMMANDING THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN FRANCE

*From a photograph by Russell & Sons*

what it was worth, and going past obstacles which held up units on their right or left. On the 28th they developed these tactics with increasing weight behind their spear-heads. Especially they exploited them at the Tolmino bridge-head, where their base of attack, and the possibilities of spreading fanwise, were greatest, and it was here that the germ of dislocation grew to disaster. The Germans and Austrians poured forward, and the Italian troops fell back ultimately in such disorder that they entangled




The Italian Line before and after the German-Austrian Attack, 24th October, 1917

their own reserves coming up on the packed roads. The Germans skilfully made use of the disorder, even to the extent of sending in their own men in Italian uniforms, and converted it into a permanent and inextricable confusion, in which none knew whether to advance or retreat, till the moment arrived when there seemed no safety but in flight. Such was the break-through at Caporetto, with the disaster of Tolmino, in its inception.

The breach was certain to widen. General Capello, with an unwelcomed prescience, prepared a withdrawal of the most wholesale kind, averring with perfect frankness that his left wing was gone. The Commander-in-Chief ordered General Montuori, in the place of General Capello, to make another effort to stem the tide. It was impossible to do so. The Second Army's left wing no longer existed; and its conquerors were streaming down the western tributaries of the Isonzo into the plain, despite all the efforts of brave units (such as the Bersaglieri at Globocak) to hold them. The disaster had left the Third Army unaffected, as well as the right wing of the Second Army, from Monte Kuk to south of Gorizia. But the farther the German-Austrian forces penetrated into the plain the more certain it was that these would be outflanked and their communications imperilled, while the Fourth Army, holding the long tenuous line which bent round like the letter A to the Trentino salient, was similarly endangered.

Cadorna lost no more time. He ordered a general retreat to the Piave line on the evening of 26th October. General Capello had suggested the Tagliamento line, but it was too late for that, and the line was too weak and too long. There were subsequent moments when a retreat much farther west seemed to be indicated. But Cadorna was well aware that retreat beyond the Piave line would imply not merely the sacrifice of

Venice, but, what was of much greater importance, the abandonment of any practicable naval base in the Adriatic. His decision was on both sides of the question the right one, though the Duc d'Aosta (Third Army) and General di Robilant (Fourth Army) hoped that they would have been allowed to hold on to their positions in the expectation that the German-Austrian drive would exhaust itself. Cadorna did not believe that the Second Army would rally, and he was content with the lesser expectation of being able to rest on the Piave if he could galvanize his troops into resistance. The Order of the Day in which he denounced the units of the Second Army who had let the enemy through was galvanic enough. It was fiercely resented, but it did its work.

The decision did not alter the critical character of the situation. The three intact corps of the Second Army (2nd, 6th, and 8th), and the whole of the Third Army, had to retreat along a narrow corridor of plain faster than an unimpeded enemy could get round the heads of their northernmost retreating columns. The Fourth Army had to edge its way back along a difficult country on the north of the invaders; and in between these two joint retreats was a hurrying crowd of fugitives, civilians and soldiers, with the advancing Germans and Austrians at their heels. The retreat of the unbroken fragments of the Second Army and the Third Army was one of the epics of the war. Its gallantry, its devotion, its sacrifice, the stands it made, the triumphs over blunders in detail which it achieved, will be always as great in Italian military history as the victories it won before and afterwards in happier conditions. On them fell the brunt of the German efforts to make the disaster which had befallen Italian arms irremediable. They stood up to it and beat the danger back. It is only by the side of their achievement that the difficulties of the Fourth Army, often fighting in isolated and almost forgotten posts and detachments[1] in the hilly country, seem less than immense. Both armies played their part, a heroic one, and they staved off the defeat of Italy. On 15th November the retreat was becoming orderly on the line of the Tagliamento; by 8th November the bulk of the Italian armies were across the Piave, and the Fourth Army had bridged the gap between the First Army and the Third. The 6th and 8th Corps of the Second Army had been joined to the Duc d'Aosta's command. On 9th and 10th November the Italians definitely established themselves on the Piave line, and turned on the pursuing enemy.

On 4th November an Allied conference was held at Rapallo, and attended by members of the British and French War Cabinets, and by military representatives of Great Britain, France, and Italy. It was the first of such monthly meetings, and, as the result of its deliberations, General Cadorna was transferred to this Council, his place as Commander-in-Chief being taken by General Diaz. General Diaz assumed no easy task. The Austro-Hungarian army began to test his lines of defence immediately, not only along the Piave line but along the old one occupied by the First Army through the Trentino, as well as from its junction at Monte Tomatico with the Piave. The Italians were compelled to revise their line between the Brenta and the Piave, abandoning Asiago (9th November), and Monte Lisser on the Brenta, and Monte Tomatico on the Piave (15th November). The Austro-German attack was not yet ended here, and was continued with determination for five days longer; but when almost at their last gasp the Italians on the Monfenara ridge crushed the culminating attack of a German Jager battalion on 21st November, and thereafter barred the way to the plain. Similar devoted resistance held the line half-way between the Brenta and Piave, and Monte Solarolo and Monte Spinoncia, during the closing days of November. It will be perceived that winter was late in coming, and this favoured the German-Austrian command in one more attempt in December, which in ordinary years could not have been made.

In the winter struggle, which began on 4th December, under the direction of General Krobatin (General von Below had

[1] One such post maintained itself in the Cadore mountains for a year; another detachment died to the last man on Monte Nero.

returned to France), the British divisions under General the Earl of Cavan were put into the Italian line at Montello, and the French divisions at Monte Tomba. The assault was preceded by a bombardment of the new kind, and was made on a 7-mile front between Monte Sisemol and Monte Badenecchi, its greatest weight being thrown on the latter. Both Monte Badenecchi and Monte Castelgomberto were lost, and it appeared as if a way might be cut down the Frenzela River towards the old key position of Valstagna. Another attack launched by General Krobatin on 11th–12th December gave him more elbow-room by the capture of Monte Spinoncia, and ultimately of Monte Asolone. But all these operations were not only costly, but were drawn out much too long to admit of their being exploited. The Italians were merely being driven from mountain to mountain. It was not till 22nd December that General Krobatin could make another attempt on the Frenzela valley. It captured prisoners, but it failed of its object, and when Christmas came, with the long-belated snow to put an end to operations, the Italians, in spite of their losses in this defensive warfare, were safe.

Their front remained quiescent for a very long time, though they were never free from anxiety, and there was always the possibility that the spring of 1918 would find Italy selected as the anvil for a great German hammer-blow. That blow fell instead on the British armies in France and Flanders, and, despite all the expostulations of German Head-quarters, the Austro-Hungarian High Command could not be induced to put all their strength into another attempt to crush the Italian front. Their reluctance was due less to want of will than to uncertainty of their ability. By the Pact of Corfu[1] Italian statesmanship had discounted a great deal of the Jugo-Slav distrust of Italy's foreign policy, and the subject races of the Eastern Adriatic hinterland were no longer to be depended on to fight for the Habsburg monarchy. They were, in the year 1918, often in a state of open mutiny, and, unless terrorized by the guns at their own backs, could not be depended on to fight. But after the German successes on the Cambrai-St. Quentin front, and on the plain of the Lys, the Austrians consented to co-operate with their Allies by striking one more blow at the Italian front. It was undertaken under the direction of a new commander, General von Arz.

General von Arz opened with a rather foolish attempt to divert attention by an assault on the Tonale valley positions on the western side of the Trentino wedge. It entirely failed, and cost him a division without in any way unsettling the plans of General Diaz. There is reason to believe that General Diaz had a quite adequate knowledge of his opponent's intentions, in which the real attack was to be on a 46-mile front along the Piave, and extending across the mountain positions between the Piave and the Brenta. The general plan was to pin General Diaz to the Lower and Middle Piave, while turning his line on either side of the shoulder-line where the Piave emerges from the mountain and curves round the great Montello ridge. The chief arrows of the Austrian attack were directed at (1) the Montello shoulder; (2) the Monfenara ridge and the adjoining salient with Monte Grappa; (3) the roads of the Frenzela on the one side of the Brenta, and by Monte Asolone on the other to Valstagna; (4) the positions guarding the Asiago rim.

The Austrian forces began to mass under the command of General von Scheuchenstuel for the wide frontal attack in the hill region between Asiago and Montello on 13th June, and refrained from bombardment in order to gain the advantage of surprise. But General Diaz, well aware of their intention, opened a withering counter-bombardment on their massing formations on 14th June, so that when the frontal attack opened on 15th June not only had the " surprise " been lost, but the assault itself had been badly shaken. The British forces of 2 divisions (23rd and 45th), in the Cesuna section west of Asiago, rendered a very good account of themselves. The 4 Austro-Hungarian divisions advancing against them, and believing that their bombardment had silenced the British front line, were caught in the curtain-fire of the defence, and only at one

[1] And the Jugo-Slav Conference at Rome.

point came to grips with a Bucks and Oxford battalion. Here the fighting was hard, but by nightfall the Austrian attack had been rolled back. On the right of the British, below Monte Sisemol, the enemy attack had a different, but equally disastrous, experience, against the French divisions, which elastically recoiled in order to draw the attacking masses into the zone of fire of the French field artillery. While the complicated Austrian imitation of a new style of German attack was staggering under this fire, the French came back at them, and here, too, von Scheuchenstuel's divisions completely failed.

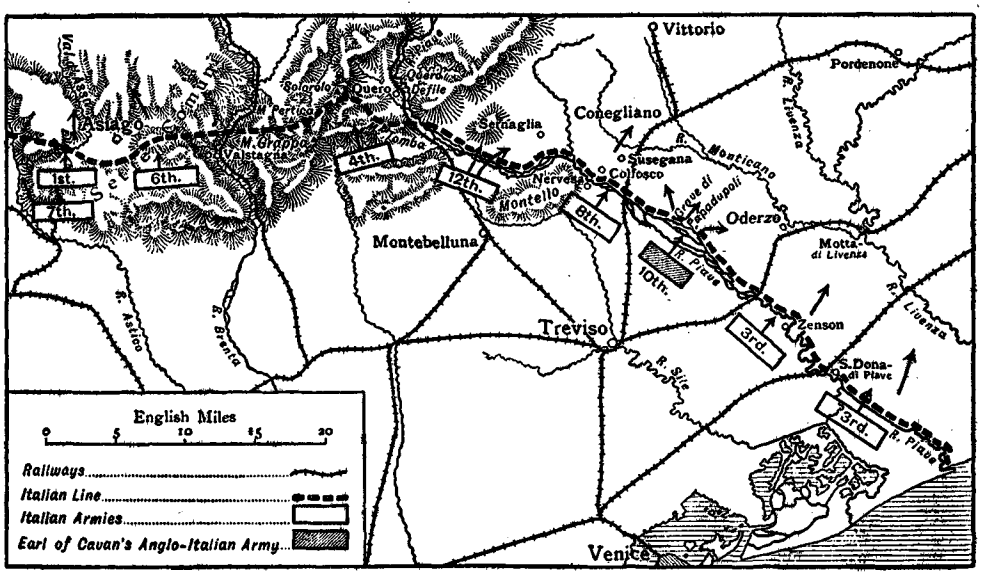
This wing operation was, however, part only of von Scheuchenstuel's attack with the main body of the 11th Austro-Hungarian army astride the Frenzela valley. This was repelled with greater difficulty by the Italians, helped by the French, and the fighting went on till next morning before the defenders could take breath. Between the Brenta and the Piave the Italian Fourth Army had to defend Monte Grappa on the one wing, the Monfenara ridge on the other. The Austrians had brought up their heaviest guns to blast a way through, and a torrent of high explosives and gas-shells was poured in the Italian positions. It was nobly sustained: it had to be, for there was little room for retreat; and the way in which the subsequent Austrian infantry attack was met was creditable not only to Italian bravery but to the cool calculation of its leadership. The Austrians were infiltrated by the Italian reserves before they could consolidate their positions, and swept back, and the outflanking manœuvre about Monte Grappa neutralized. Much of the ground was recovered by ingenious and perfectly-timed counter-attack, and by the end of the day the Austrians here had been fought to a standstill.

These attacks, despite their severity, were subsidiary (as were those on the Lower Piave) to the attempt on the Montello ridge. The ridge, 7 miles long, which had been fortified by General Plumer during its earlier occupation by the British divisions, rises formidably above the plain of the Piave. The river washes its base; but in June there is little depth in the water. After a heavy night's bombardment the Austrians crossed the river under a smoke-screen at Nervesa, and stormed the height from two sides. Their two assaulting divisions met on the summit, and, uniting, tried to sweep the ridge from west to east. Other Austrian attacks were made to divert attention lower down the Piave at Monte de Piave, at the Zenson loop, and in the lagoon sector. General Diaz was not deceived. He devoted all his attention to the southern side of the Montello ridge below Nervesa, preferring even to give ground on the northern side of the ridge than there. He was right. The Austrians could not sweep the ridge; they became entangled in its entrenchments, and could go neither forward nor back. Their attack failed; and suddenly the weather intervened to their discomfiture. A thunderstorm swept down the hills, raised the Piave to flood, and cut them off from their supports. They were penned; and the Italian gunners and aviators smashed the bridges across the flood.

The Austrian High Command made a desperate effort to relieve the situation by increasing pressure on the Middle Piave, and General Wurm, by exercising the greatest pressure, won a strong and long bridge-head there. He had to bring up Hungarian troops to do so, and these were assailed in turn by the Italian shock-troops, the Arditi, whom General Diaz was now in a position to spare. The river was coming down in strong flood, swollen by snows, and carrying pine trees which swept away the bridges. The plight of General Wurm's Hungarians, as well as that of the unfortunate division marooned on the Montello, grew steadily worse; and on 20th June the Emperor Carl presided over a Council of War at which it was determined to cut the losses and withdraw as soon as possible. A fall of the river enabled the withdrawal to be made on the night of 25–26th June before General Diaz could bring up enough divisions for a counter-attack, so that the attackers escaped the full penalty for their failure. Nevertheless, their offensive powers by it were entirely broken; and in the various sectors of repulse they had lost 200,000 men. The Italian casualties were fewer than 40,000.

The moral disintegration of the armies opposed to General Diaz proceeded apace in the weeks that followed, but it was not safe to reckon on it while Germany was undefeated; and it is to be remembered that, even as late as the beginning of October, 1918, the British Cabinet was by no means assured that the German collapse was at hand. There was every reason, therefore, why General Diaz should refrain, with his own comparatively unaided forces, from embarking on a counter-attack against the Fifth eastwards, and interrupting the communications of the Sixth Army. Meanwhile the Fourth Italian Army was to take the offensive on the old battle-ground of Asiago and Monte Grappa.

The action of the Fourth Army began on 24th October with a display of furious energy, and was pushed so vigorously that the Austrian lines were penetrated north-west of Monte Grappa. The Austrians reacted with a vigour which increased on the 25th, by which time the main battle had




Italy's Triumph: map showing the disposition of the Italian and Allied armies at the beginning and continuance of the attack on 24th October and following days

Austro-Hungarian forces. But about the end of September, General Foch communicated to the Italian Commander-in-Chief his own hopes and expectations about the situation in France, and before 7th October, General Diaz had recast his plans in order to assume an offensive in which a distinguished part was to be taken by the three British divisions (7th, 23rd, 48th) under Lord Cavan. The blow was for a main attack, consisting of an advance across the Piave with the Tenth Army (mixed Italo-British, commanded by General Lord Cavan) and the Eighth and Twelfth Italian Armies. This was to drive a wedge between the Fifth and Sixth Austrian Armies, driving the

been joined on the Piave. In this action the movements of the Tenth (Italo-British), Eighth, and Twelfth Armies were co-ordinated under General Caviglia, commanding the Eighth Army; and the Tenth Army (General Lord Cavan) formed the arrow-head of the thrust. This was the first to cross the Piave—no easy task, for its width at the selected point was a mile and a half, with a swift stream which a flood on the eve of the assault brought to a torrent. Opposite Cavan's army was an island, the Grave di Papadopoli, in mid-stream, occupied by the enemy as an advance post. Cavan's own forces consisted of the 11th Italian Corps, already in position, secretly

strengthened as the hour of assault drew nigh by the 14th British Corps, preliminarily concentrated at Treviso.

The flood on the Piave was an unwelcome addition to the problem the British had to solve, but it was converted into a gain by a suggestion emenating from General Babington, commanding the 14th Corps, that the island Grave di Papadopoli should be rushed before the main attack was begun. This was done on the night of 23rd–24th October, and was an adventure of great peril, carried out with noteworthy skill, organization, and determination. The Austrians were so completely surprised that part of the garrison was caught asleep. The battalions which had taken it (without any artillery preparation) were heavily shelled for 48 hours, while the conquest of the island was completed by the 7th British and the 37th Italian Divisions. Thus the main channel of the Piave was put behind the Tenth Army, and enabled it to get over bridging materials for the passage of the narrower channel, and for supporting the attack on a wider front on the other side. Just before midnight on the 26th, the heavy bombardment along the front of General Caviglia's three armies began, and was joined for the first time by the British guns, whose presence had been hitherto concealed. Seven hours afterwards Cavan's Tenth Army went across; and, thanks to the spring-board it had obtained in the Grave di Papadopoli, did all that was required of it. The right wing consisted of 2 Italian divisions (23rd and 57th); the left wing of 2 British divisions (7th and 23rd). The British had to cross half a mile of river, and many were lost in it, but they went on without a pause to the conquest of the first line of Austrian trenches, and by nightfall had established a deep and wide bridge-head on the other side of the Piave, covering seven villages. Behind this bridge-head the task of bridging the Piave went on with unflinching energy, despite the flood and the enemy aeroplanes.

This was the real break through: for north of it the 8th and 12th Italian Armies south of the Quero defile, though they had crossed, could make no headway, because sufficient reinforcements were not to be got across the Piave to establish them in a winning position. The situation was remedied by sending over the Italian 18th Corps (General Basso) to cross by Cavan's bridges. This was done on the night of the 27th–28th, and next morning, with its reinforcements, the Tenth Army was able to hold out a hand to help the Eighth Army, and to begin to outflank the Austrians opposed to that army. The advance for this end was resumed on the morning of the 28th, and by night the Tenth Army had been pushed well forward to the river Monticano farther east. The Austrians facing the Eighth Army became at once nervous about their communications, and let go their hold of the Susegana heights. Whereupon the commander of the Eighth Italian Army brought his right wing over the Piave from Nervesa, joined up with the Tenth Army, and thus doubled the driving-front of his wedge.

This wide frontal phalanx began to go forward in parallel columns on the morning of the 29th, the Austrians retreating nervously before it, and a stretch of the river Monticano was seized during the day. Some British cavalry (Lieutenant-Colonel Lowther) seized a bridge, and the hurrying British and Italian infantry began to convert the retreat in front of them into a rout. Hardly any Austrian stand was made, except at the Monticano, and it was here that the last serious resistance was offered. It had few prospects of success, for by this time the 31st Italian Division[1] had joined the British divisions on the left of the Tenth Army, and the right front was enlarged by the 10th Italian Division. Farther south the Third Italian Army was now coming into action, and also crossed the Piave. The Monticano was forced on the night of the 29th, and by the 30th the Third Army had joined in what now became a pursuit. By the 31st the line of the Livenza was in the Allies' hands, and the magnitude of the Austrian defeat depended thenceforward only on the ability of the victors to press fast on their heels. The enemy's defensive powers had vanished.

On the northern front, the Fourth Army's

[1] It included the 332nd American Regiment.

demonstration had been translated into an assault which the Austrian troops neither could, nor would, resist. They met the victors half-way, coming down from the mountains in droves. Their artillery, the compulsion of which had kept them solid, had failed them, and the whole Grappa section gave way. They offered more resistance towards Asiago, but the Italian Sixth Army was now sent up the Brenta valley to undermine their defence. The Austrians held out for a day or so from Stelvio to Astico, but as the Sixth Army pushed eagerly up the Brenta, and began action over an extended front, they began to waver. The Fourth Army, on its right, was able to clear the whole of its front, and its success was passed on to the Twelfth Army, which, pushing up through the Quero defile, linked the Fourth, Twelfth, and Eighth Armies in one advancing line.

On the right of this again the Tenth Army was pushing on faster and faster, and the Third Army extended its active operations to the coast. The enemy was in flight and could not recover. It was now the moment for the Italian commander to throw every man, gun, and horse into the scale, and the First Army was sent into action on the left of the Sixth Army up the Assa valley, taking Monte Cimone and the Tonezza plateau in its stride. At the same time the Seventh Army broke through the enemy's fortifications at the Sella del Tonale, and went on to capture the heights which had been held by the Austrians north of the Pasubio *massif*. All the valley roads from the northern front to Trent were crowded with fugitives, and the Italian commanders had now no objective more difficult than that of cutting the retreat. By 3rd November Trent was occupied; and on the same day an Italian landing party at Trieste had received the warmest welcome from the Jugo-Slav National Council which had taken over the town. The Austrian fleet was already out of the war.

The victorious armies had nothing to do but to move forward, though on the Tagliamento, on 4th November, some resistance was offered by Austrian rear-guards, one of which came into collision with the 332nd American Regiment on 4th November, with loss to itself. But, almost before the flicker of this skirmish had died down, the rest of the Austro-Hungarian forces had ceased to exist as an army. By the afternoon of 4th November an armistice had been sought and granted, and Austria-Hungary was out of the war. The battle, which had begun on 24th October and lasted barely 10 days, had been one in which 51 Italian divisions, 3 British divisions, 2 French divisions, 1 Czecho-Slovak division, and 1 American regiment, had defeated 63 Austro-Hungarian divisions. (It should be added that the 3rd British Division, the 48th, had been lent to the Italian Sixth Army, and in its advance against the collapsing Austrians captured 20,000 prisoners, including a corps commander, and 500 guns. Lord Cavan computed the captures of the other two divisions of the 14th Corps at 28,000 prisoners and 219 guns.) The epitaph on the Austro-Hungarian failure was written by General Diaz, who, in speaking of its destruction, said that it had left in the hands of the victors 300,000 men and 5,000 guns. A more severe *revanche* for Caporetto can hardly be imagined. It is necessary to note that, according to the German Headquarters Staff, the best Hungarian divisions had been withdrawn from the Piave by order of the Archduke Josef.

# CHAPTER XXII

## THE NAVY DURING THE WAR

Lord Fisher in his memoirs has emphasized as the three deficiencies of the British Navy at the beginning of the Great War: fast battle-cruisers, destroyers, and a sufficiently-protected harbour on the East Coast of Great Britain. To the deficiency in battle-cruisers is to be attributed the risk to British mercantile shipping in 1914 and the early part of 1915, as well as the disaster to Admiral Cradock's squadron off Coronel. The outbreak of hostilities had left a number of German warships unshepherded, and, though their destruction or internment was certain, they followed the right course in doing all the damage they could compass before being rounded up. For example, the German light cruiser *Emden*, after having disappeared from the China station, and having been unheard of for six weeks, appeared on 10th September, 1914, in the Bay of Bengal, and captured six British ships; on 22nd September she bombarded Madras; on 30th September captured seven more British steamers; on 20th October another seven; on 28th October steamed into Penang Roads and sank a Russian cruiser, and a French destroyer which gallantly tried to close with her. On 9th November the Captain of the *Emden* (von Müller), landed a party at the Cocos Keeling Islands to destroy the cable and wireless station; but before this could be done the telegraphists on the island sent out a message which was picked up by the *Minotaur*, and re-signalled to H.M.A.S. *Sydney*, a cruiser of the Australian squadron on convoy duty. Within three hours of the receipt of the message the *Sydney*, proceeding full speed towards Cocos Keeling, sighted the *Emden*, engaged her half an hour afterwards, and having the range of her with 6-inch guns to 4.1-inch guns, forced her ashore, burning and half sunk. The *Emden* fought strongly, and surrendered only after losing 7 officers and 104 men.

The lessons of the insuperable advantages at sea of speed and gun calibre were repeated in the same month, and in the month following, by the actions of Coronel and the Falkland Islands in the South Pacific. Admiral Graf von Spee left Kiao-Chau in July with the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*, twin cruisers of 11,000 tons, speed 22 knots, eight 8.2-inch guns, six 6-inch, and lighter armament. He was separated by many hundreds of miles from the three light cruisers *Dresden*, *Nürnberg*, and *Leipzig* (each 3500 tons; speed, 25 knots; armament, ten 4.1-inch and lighter guns; two torpedo-tubes). The *Dresden* was in the Atlantic; the other two were in the Pacific. The *Dresden* had many adventures in joining von Spee's squadron, to which the *Nürnberg* and *Leipzig* were earlier recruits, and narrowly escaped capture by the British West Atlantic Squadron under Admiral Cradock. The coaling and victualling of the units of Admiral von Spee's squadron were contrived with great resource, daring, and ingenuity. Eventually the squadron was made one off Easter Island, where it obtained considerable supplies of meat from the dwellers there, who were at that time ignorant that a war was being fought.

Admiral Cradock's squadron was a weak one, even when reinforced by the *Glasgow*, which, like the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth*, had been searching for the *Dresden*. The *Good Hope* (14,100 tons; speed, 23½ knots; armament, two 9.2-inch guns, sixteen 6-inch and lighter guns), and the *Monmouth* (9800 tons; speed 23 knots; armament, fourteen 6-inch and lighter guns), were old ships, and of faulty construction for fighting, not good in a sea, and exposing a great deal of surface. The *Glasgow* was a good light cruiser of 4800 tons, with two 6-inch and ten 4-inch guns, and a speed over 26 knots. It will be seen that this squadron was of very heterogeneous units, and could as a squadron be outsteamed, outranged, and outmanœuvred by that of von Spee. It was,

*Drawn by Arthur Y. Burgess*

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

A German battleship disabled by the gunfire of H.M.S. *Warspite*

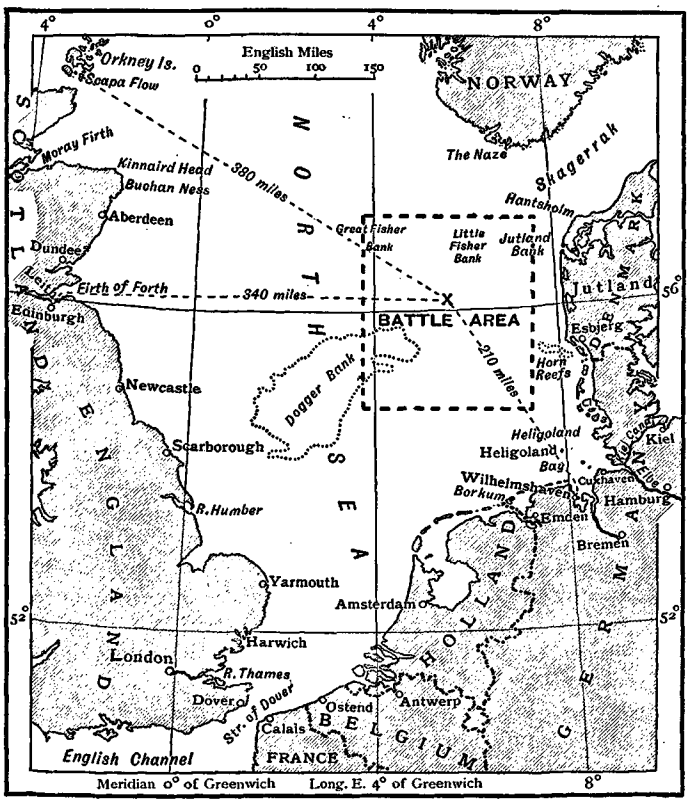
owing to its lightness of metal, to have been reinforced by the old battle-ship *Canopus*, which had four 12-inch guns in addition to her twelve 6-inch, but her speed was only 16½ knots, and she did not catch up to Cradock's squadron. Cradock arrived in Chilian waters in his search for von Spee towards the end of October, 1914, and the *Glasgow* went into Coronel, whence her exit on 1st November was observed by the scouting *Nürnberg*. On the afternoon of a day of bright sunshine and sudden squalls, which set the top-hampered British ships rolling, the squadrons sighted one another.

Von Spee steered south nearer to the land in the *Scharnhorst*, followed by the *Gneisenau*; the *Dresden* was some distance behind, and the *Nürnberg*, recalled, was coming up fast. Cradock also steamed south farther from the land, his ship, the *Good Hope*, leading, with the *Monmouth* and the *Glasgow* following, as well as an armoured liner, the *Otranto*. Some twelve hours away was the *Canopus*, steaming north.

The two squadrons were too far away on their parallel courses for Cradock's guns to have any chance of hitting the German targets, though he had the sun behind him. But it was clear that when the sun set the British ships would be silhouetted against the sunset glow. Cradock, therefore, made an attempt to rid himself of his prospective and certain disadvantage by turning four points and closing in nearer to the land. It was a desperate attempt which could have no hope of success unless the German admiral were blind to his advantage of position, because von Spee had the heels of his opponents. The German ships, also turning four points, increased their speed to maintain their advantage, and when, after six o'clock, the light began to favour them, drew nearer to the British squadron, and opened fire at 5 miles. The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had a deserved reputation for gunnery, and after two bracketing salvos, the third caught both the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth*. The *Good Hope* suffered more. Her two 9-inch guns could not find their target, and her 6-inch guns, which were almost awash in the rolling seas, were ineffective. The *Scharnhorst* scored thirty-five hits on her, and destroyed one of her turrets. Her guns were put out of action, and the desperate effort of her commander to draw near enough to use the torpedoes was futile. The *Monmouth* was silenced, and crawled on down by the head. Both vessels were on fire, and von Spee, after firing a few rounds at them in the darkness that had fallen, sighting his guns by the glow of the fires which had started on both ships, came about and left the task of finishing them to his light cruisers, which had now come up, and two of which, the *Dresden* and *Leipzig*, had engaged the *Glasgow*. The *Good Hope* went down in the darkness; the *Monmouth* was sunk by the *Nürnberg*, which was coming up to rejoin von Spee. The last signal of the *Monmouth's* commander (Captain Brand) was to tell the *Glasgow* (which Cradock had previously ordered to get away at full speed) that the *Monmouth* was making water rapidly, and that as he could not get away he should go back and try to ram the enemy. The *Glasgow's* captain, faced with a cruel decision, rightly elected to make his escape as best he could. Had he delayed, his ship must have been lost like the rest, and it was his duty to seek and warn the *Canopus*.

The *Glasgow* joined the *Canopus*, and the two made their way back to the Falkland Islands, which in all probability would be raided by Admiral von Spee. Meanwhile, as soon as the British Admiralty learned of the disaster, it prepared and sent to sea with admirable secrecy the two battle-cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, under Admiral Doveton Sturdee. These met their assigned consorts, the *Carnarvon* (Rear-Admiral Stoddart), *Kent*, *Glasgow*, and *Bristol*, at a South Atlantic rendezvous, and the squadron reached Fort William, Falkland Islands, where the *Canopus*, *Cornwall*, *Cameroon*, and *Bristol* awaited them on 7th December. They began to prepare for the search for Admiral von Spee's squadron, but it was von Spee who came straight to them the next morning, with the intention, no doubt, of raiding Fort William, and in ignorance of the presence there of its new defenders. The Germans' arrival on a clear morning was revealed to the signallers on

the island at 8 o'clock, and at 9.20 a.m. the *Gneisenau* and *Nürnberg* were visible getting ready to shell the wireless station. The *Canopus*, inside the harbour, loosed off a salvo of 12-inch shells at them; but the Germans do not seem to have been immediately apprised of the presence of the battle-cruisers, though they changed their course.




The Scene of the Battle of Jutland, May 31–June 1, 1916

At 9.45 they could have been left in no doubt, for, following the *Glasgow* and the *Kent*, the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* put out to sea.

As soon as the character of the British ships was apparent the German squadron adopted the only course open to them, which was that of flight. The *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* were more heavily armoured than the two British battle-cruisers, but in speed and gun-power were no match for them. The conditions of the battle of Coronel were therefore reversed. Admiral Sturdee had a long day in front of him, and nothing to fear, while he kept off the German cruisers and hammered them at long range. Just before one o'clock the *Inflexible* fired the first shot at the enemy squadron at a 5-miles range; and thenceforward the action split into three sections. The *Kent*, *Glasgow*, and *Cornwall* were sent to deal with the light cruisers *Leipzig* (at which the first shots had been fired), *Nürnberg*, and *Dresden*, which von Spee had sent away to the south-west, while the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* dealt with the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. The slow *Carnarvon* toiled after the big cruisers; the *Bristol* had been left behind to deal with the enemy colliers.

Admiral von Spee was in a hopeless position, but he fought a sailor's devoted action, sacrificing his life and his ships rather than allow them to fall into the hands of the enemy. At about twenty-five minutes past one his ship, the *Scharnhorst*, and its sister, the *Gneisenau*, abandoned the attempt to run, and began to close the range in order to do what damage they could. Their guns were excellently served, and the *Invincible* was hit several times, though the hits the *Scharnhorst* received were very much more damaging. At a quarter to two the *Scharnhorst's* shells began to straddle the *Invincible*, and Admiral Sturdee drew away again to avoid risks that were unnecessary, while his 12-inch guns still continued their punishment. After another twenty-five minutes of it the German ships could stand no more, and began to draw out of the fight. Admiral Sturdee went after them, and in half an hour had reopened fire, his guns and those of the

*Inflexible* battering the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* with increasing severity as the two German ships became harder to handle. Still the *Scharnhorst* replied, though on fire, and still the distance between the ships lessened, till nearly every 12-inch shell found the target. At a quarter-past four—that is to say, after an hour and a half of this terrible experience—an eyewitness on the *Invincible* thought he saw the *Scharnhorst* strike her flag. Whether, indeed, she did will never be known, for at that moment another shell struck her broken hulk, and she turned over on her side and capsized. The *Invincible* and *Inflexible* then turned their guns on to the *Gneisenau*, which was still fighting as fiercely as if the battle could be won. Her captain faced his great adversaries (who at this hour had been joined by the *Carnarvon*), and for an hour continued firing, though the range was too great for the shells to damage the *Invincible*.

The British fire became more and more accurate; the condition of the *Gneisenau* more and more desperate. But it was not till ten minutes after six that the *Gneisenau* ceased to fire altogether, persisting with one gun till her ammunition had been exhausted. At two minutes after six she turned on her side, and the boats of the *Inflexible* and *Carnarvon* were ordered out to save survivors. Like the *Scharnhorst*, she had been fought by her commander to the last; and the action of these two ships render the Battle of the Falklands the brightest page in the annals of the German Navy.

Meanwhile, the *Glasgow*, *Kent*, and *Cornwall* had continued their pursuit of the *Dresden*, *Nürnberg*, and *Leipzig*. The *Glasgow*, outpacing her slower but more heavily-armed companion, was first to draw up to the German light cruisers, and engaged the *Leipzig* (2.0 p.m.) till the *Cornwall* came up (4.15); the *Kent* having turned to follow the *Nürnberg*. After a fight lasting more than three hours the *Leipzig*, pierced till she looked like a fire-bucket, surrendered, but afterwards sank. The *Dresden* had long been lost in the mist. The *Kent* had a long chase after the *Nürnberg*, which could hardly have been caught but for trouble with her boilers, and the two ships were not in range till nearly half-past five. The *Kent's* captain could not afford to spend time in long-range tactics, and went in as close as he could get to finish it. The *Kent* was hit thirty-six times by the *Nürnberg's* shells, but by half-past six the German ship, on fire forward and her guns silenced, at last hauled her flag. Like her companions, she had fought as long as was humanly possible, and sank an hour later. Only twelve of her crew could be picked up. The *Dresden*, after playing hide-and-seek for three months, took refuge at Juan Fernandez, and having been found there by the *Glasgow* and *Kent*, on 14th March, 1915, was blown up by her commander after a five minutes' action.

Of the other German warships which were at sea when war was declared, the *Königsberg* hid up the Rufigi River on the eastern coast of Africa, where her exit was blocked by sinking ships in the passage-way, and where, after a very curious fight, she was destroyed by the fire of two monitors, *Severn* and *Mersey*, on 5th July, 1915; the *Karlsrühe* is believed to have sunk somewhere in the West Indies in November, 1914; the *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, a converted cruiser, was interned at Newport News by the United States Government on 9th April, 1915, and the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* suffered the same fate on 26th April, 1915. Of ships which the Germans succeeded in sending to sea as raiders during the war the most successful was the *Möewe*, which, after a most spirited career of several months in 1916, got back in March to her German anchorage, having captured or sunk 15 merchant ships. Another raiding ship, the *Greif*, was caught and sunk in the North Sea by the *Alcantara* on 29th February of the same year, before she had had time to settle down to her career.

With no fleet at sea, the German navy had but two courses open to it. The first, which proved impracticable, was to snatch a victory by surprise or tactics from the British Grand Fleet; the second was to inflict what damage was possible by sudden raids on the British East Coast. The second course might aid the first by tempting the British Commander-in-Chief to some imprudent disposition of his forces. There was a third course, subsequently taken, which was to develop

the submarine to the highest point of numbers and efficiency and achieve the advantages of a blockade of Great Britain by the destruction of her merchant shipping and transports. This plan involved keeping the German High Seas Fleet in harbour as a quiescent, but potentially active, adversary, with which the British Grand Fleet must reckon, and must accordingly treat as a fleet in being—a condition of this responsibility being that a sufficiently large number of destroyers must always be kept as a screen for the British fleet. While so detained they could not be used for the purpose for which they were urgently required, namely, that of holding the German submarines in check. These technical considerations did not appear in 1915, when the German navy's energy and ingenuity first displayed itself in raids on the English East Coast. These began on 3rd November, 1914, the day following a British Admiralty proclamation of the closure of the North Sea owing to the persistent sowing of mines. On 16th December 5 German battle-cruisers, *Derfflinger*, *Seydlitz*, *Moltke*, *Von der Tann*, and *Blücher*, bombarded Scarborough, Whitby, and the Hartlepools, inflicting losses of about 100 civilians killed, and 500 wounded. The same squadron, less the *Von der Tann*, and accompanied by 6 light-cruisers and a force of destroyers, was encountered on 24th January, 1915, by Admiral Beatty, with the "Cat" squadron of battle-cruisers, the *Lion*, *Tiger*, and *Princess Royal*, as well as the *New Zealand*, and *Indomitable*, and the light-cruisers *Southampton*, *Nottingham*, *Birmingham*, *Lowestoft*, together with the *Arethusa*, *Aurora*, and *Undaunted*, and three squadrons of destroyers. This was a powerful squadron, and the 13.5-inch guns of the "Cat" cruisers outmatched anything the Germans had. The *Aurora* first sighted an enemy light cruiser (the *Kohlberg*), and Admiral Beatty, having been signalled, immediately worked up pace in order to get in touch with the main German squadron now visible. The German squadron as immediately declined engagement, changing course from north-west to south-east, the squadrons being then some 14 miles apart and 40 distant from the English coast. It was about 7.30 a.m. At 8.0 a.m. the distance between the squadrons had been reduced to 10 miles; a shot from one of the *Lion's* 13.5's hit the *Blücher*, the last in line of the German big four. Ten minutes later the *Tiger* engaged the *Blücher*, and the *Lion* attacked the *Seydlitz*. After another short interval the *Princess Royal's* 13.5's were brought to bear; and the ill-fated *Blücher*, slower than her consorts, began to fall behind into the fire of the *New Zealand*. She was on fire by 9.45, and so were the *Seydlitz* and the *Derfflinger*. By 10.45 the *Blücher*, terribly mauled, fell out of the line, but it was not till after 12 o'clock that she was sunk by a torpedo from the destroyer *Meteor*, just after she had fired her last shot. Her survivors were picked up by the *Arethusa*, which also had hit her with torpedoes.

The *Lion*, which was leading the pursuit of the other German cruisers, was hit by a stray shot about 11 o'clock, and, though not vitally damaged, was unable to make more than 10 knots an hour. Thenceforward she had to be protected by a ring of destroyers to keep off submarines (and eventually had to be partially towed home), while the *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, and *New Zealand* went on after the enemy. Admiral Beatty left the *Lion* and followed the chase at some distance in a destroyer, but at midday he met his 3 battle-cruisers returning. Deterred by the risk of plunging into an enemy mine-field, or of being sunk by one of the mines which the German squadron was strewing in its flight, they had broken off the action. Such results as accrued were satisfactory. The *Blücher* was a valuable ship; and the promptness with which an opportunity had been seized convinced the Germans that the British Admiralty Intelligence Department was too well informed to permit of the continuance of such raids with impunity. They were made no more.

In the North Sea a ceaseless activity was pursued, in which destroyers, submarines, patrol-boats, trawlers, all played their part, and their activities were dependent on the protection of the big ships at their backs; but of larger fleet actions there were no signs, and no symptoms beyond the rumours of the full-dress cruises of units or combinations

of the British Grand Fleet, and strictly limited sallies of the German High Seas Fleet. As on land, so at sea, there seemed to uninstructed eyes to be a deadlock. The German High Seas Fleet could do no more, and no better, than act as a passive threat to Great Britain; the British Grand Fleet, though doing its share in the war by the protection which it afforded to its sea transport, as by the blockade which it exercised on the Central Powers, could not undertake offensive operations on the German strongholds without risks which the War Council were unwilling to sanction. Germany conceived the multiplication of her submarines and the intensification of submarine warfare as a way out of the deadlock; Great Britain sought in the Dardanelles and at Gallipoli, a back-door key to it. At the Dardanelles the departure from prudence resulted in the loss of capital ships, as Lord Fisher had predicted that it would, though he did not veto the adventure by a threat of resigning his position as First Lord. His opinion was that of the best-informed naval strategists, who, in a secret memorandum presented in December, 1906, to the Imperial Defence Committee, condemned any project of rushing the Dardanelles by ships as futile and dangerous[1]. These anticipations were borne out in the event. The bombardment of the Dardanelles began under the direction of Admiral Carden on 19th February, 1915. He had under him 3 old battleships: the *Vengeance*, *Cornwallis*, *Triumph*; a newer one, the *Agamemnon*, the battle-cruiser *Inflexible*; 3 old French battleships, the *Suffren*, *Gaulois*, and *Bouvet*. (The *Queen Elizabeth*, the newest of the British battleships, was afterwards sent, despite a protest from Lord Fisher, but was fortunately withdrawn; otherwise she would probably have been torpedoed.) On 25th February the bombardment was again renewed, and a number of forts were silenced, though not till the end of the day, and the trawlers could then be sent in for the clearance of the mines, which was one of the steps towards the methodical reduction of the Dardanelles according to Admiral Carden's plan.

Meanwhile discussion was taking place in England as to the desirability of supplementing the naval attempt by a land expedition. On 6th March another bombardment was undertaken; between then and 16th March, when Admiral Carden resigned owing to ill-health, handing over the command to Admiral de Robeck, the question whether the Navy should or should not act alone was decided in favour of combined operations. Admiral de Robeck was in favour of again making an attempt to break into the Sea of Marmora with ships. The sweeping operations in the meanwhile had been conducted with great gallantry, but also with considerable loss. On 18th March Admiral de Robeck's decisive endeavour began at 10.45 a.m. Four big ships, the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Inflexible*, *Agamemnon*, and *Lord Nelson*, engaged the forts of Chanak and Kelid Bahr at long range. Other ships closed in, and a French squadron (*Suffren*, *Gaulois*, *Charlemagne*, *Bouvet*) got up the Straits as far as Kephez Point. They were relieved three hours after in their close range bombardment by the *Vengeance*, *Irresistible*, *Albion*, *Majestic*, *Swiftsure*, and *Ocean*, and as the French ships were passing back the *Bouvet* struck a floating mine and sank. All the ships were now being hit, but the attempt went on till dark. At four o'clock the *Irresistible* went down in deep water; then the *Ocean* sank, and the *Inflexible* was so badly damaged that she could only just limp away, thanks to the ability of her officers and the discipline of her crew. The attempt had thus failure written upon it, though Admiral de Robeck was anxious to go on, and the British and French War Council were willing that he should do so. Admiral de Robeck, on second thoughts, urged that the mine menace was too great, and that a fleet operation should be combined with one on land,[2] which was the conclusion that some, wise before the event, had reached.

After this fleet actions were suspended, and were replaced by the multifarious duties of routine, with all that it implied, in patrol work, in submarine effort, and in the unending task of supporting land operations wher-

[1] Major-General Sir C. E. Caldwell: *Morning Post*, 24th November, 1919.

[2] Described in the following chapter.

ever necessary, from the North Sea to the Dardanelles and the Persian Gulf.

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On 30th May, 1916, the Grand Fleet under Sir John Jellicoe, started from its three bases of Scapa Flow in the Orkneys, Cromarty Firth, and Rosyth, for one of its periodical sweeps of the North Sea. Sir David Beatty, with the Battle-Cruiser Squadron and the 5th Battle Squadron (Sir Evan Thomas), set out from Rosyth; and a rendezvous was appointed in the North Sea which would place Sir David about 60 miles south of Sir John Jellicoe, but in contact with him. At 2 p.m. on 31st May the battle fleet under Jellicoe was between Aberdeen and the north end of Jutland, steaming line ahead in 6 divisions, which reading from east to west were: 1st Division (Vice-Admiral Jerram), *King George V*, *Ajax*, *Centurion*, *Erin*; 2nd Division (Rear-Admiral Leveson), *Orion*, *Monarch*, *Conqueror*, *Thunderer*; 3rd Division (Admiral Sir J. Jellicoe), *Iron Duke*, *Royal Oak*, *Superb*, *Canada*; 4th Division (Vice-Admiral Sir D. Sturdee), *Benbow*, *Bellerophon*, *Temeraire*, *Vanguard*; 5th Division (Rear-Admiral Gaunt), *Colossus*, *Collingwood*, *Neptune*, *St. Vincent*; 6th Division (Admiral Burney), *Marlborough*, *Revenge*, *Hercules*, *Agincourt*. They were screened by 3 destroyer flotillas, and a light-cruiser squadron, and other cruisers, *Cochrane*, *Shannon*, *Minotaur*, *Defence*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Black Prince*, and *Warrior*, were 16 miles ahead. At the same hour, 60 miles south, Sir David Beatty, with the battle-cruisers *Lion*, *Queen Mary*, *Princess Royal*, and *Tiger* (all 26,000 tons and carrying eight 13.5-inch guns), *Indefatigable* and *New Zealand*; and Sir Evan Thomas, with the battleships *Barham*, *Malaya*, *Warspite*, and *Valiant* (same tonnage as the big battle-cruisers, with eight 15-inch guns, but lesser speed), were steaming north to close up with Sir John Jellicoe. Their scouts of destroyers and light-cruisers found that the German fleet was coming up along the Jutland coast on a parallel course, headed by 5 battle-cruisers under Admiral von Hipper.

The *Galatea* (light-cruiser) reported this to Admiral Beatty at 2.20, and he at once turned south-south-east to head Admiral Hipper near Horn Reef. Previous indications gathered by sea-plane of the enemy's position reached Admiral Beatty at about 3.30, and shortly afterwards the German battle-cruisers were sighted at a distance of about 13 miles. They had turned southwards to seek the aid of the German battleships coming up behind them. Beatty steered east-south-east in a line of bearing, closing in towards the German course with his light-cruisers ahead. At 3.48 the opponents opened fire at 18,000 yards. Beatty appeared to have the advantage, since he had 6 battle-cruisers to the enemy's 5, and behind him Evan Thomas's battleships were coming into action, though at the very great range of 20,000 yards (11 miles). But the haze floating up from the east obscured the German target, while the British one was still visible, and there seems little doubt that the German system of fire control at the beginning of an action was rather better than the British, though it had a tendency to get out of gear more quickly. The consequence was calamitous, though not disastrous. The *Queen Mary* was destroyed by a salvo and blew up; the *Indefatigable* was struck by several shells, one of which pierced her magazine, and she, too, blew up. In spite of the advantage gained by these occurrences the fire of the German ships slackened under the British attack.

Between the two battling squadrons the destroyers fought their own engagement, and the 8 destroyers of the British 13th Flotilla beat back the attempt of the 15 German destroyers to close, and then went in themselves to attack. The fight was all the time streaming southwards at 25 knots, and was therefore fast approaching the oncoming German main fleet. This was sighted at 4.42. Sir David Beatty, therefore, immediately turned north, and as he approached Admiral Evan Thomas's squadron these big ships closed up behind his line. The German battle-cruisers also changed course from south-south-west to north-north-west to follow in parallel line. The return north began about 5 o'clock (summer time).

Admiral Beatty had now successfully deployed, in spite of his losses, 8 ships

against Admiral von Hipper's 5; the British destroyers also, in spite of losses, were still active, and the German line of battle-cruisers began to waver. Moreover, Beatty had the legs of them (25 knots average to 22), and began to aim at heading them and encircling their route. His method of doing this would be (after passing ahead of the German ships) to change direction from north-east to east. Two important things were happening at the same time: Sir John Jellicoe's main fleet was approaching, and the haze was thickening to a perplexing mist. Into this mist the light-cruisers first ran, and in it, at 5.15, British and German sighted one another. The bigger British ships had to come up cautiously, lest they should injure their comrades of Beatty's command, for, though in this narrative the names of ships are given by tens, the number of craft engaged were counted by the hundred.

About 6 o'clock Beatty had cleared the head of the German for his curling movement, and, about 6.20, Admiral Hood, with the 3rd Battle-Cruiser Squadron, appeared out of the mist on his port bow, and by Beatty's orders fell in behind. Again an accidental shell found its way to a magazine, exploding in the ammunition shaft, and the *Invincible*, with Hood and all on board, went down. Beatty now strove to place himself between the land and von Hipper, whose battle-cruisers had by this time been reduced from 5 to 3, and who was being forced to turn first east, then south, then south-west. Jellicoe, meanwhile, preceded by the cruiser (not battle-cruiser) squadrons of Rear-Admirals Arbuthnot and Heath, was feeling his way towards the German main fleet under Admiral von Scheer, now coming up behind von Hipper, and was striving to deploy without injuring Beatty's squadrons. The cruisers of Arbuthnot and Heath, pushing towards the German main fleet, came under a heavy fire, and the *Defence* (Rear-Admiral Arbuthnot), sank, and the *Warrior* was mortally damaged. At 6.17 the battle fleet came into action, though not without a further mishap to the *Warspite*, which, fortunately, was remedied without loss of the ship; and at last the full weight of the British Grand Fleet was measured against that of the German High Seas Fleet. But not its full power. The mist, and the enemy's smoke screens, intervened. From 6.17 to 8.20 the running fight to the south-west was conducted in the mist, and seldom were more than 8 of the retreating German ships to be seen together; more often not more than 3 or 4. At nine o'clock they were out of sight. The pursuit did not cease; the destroyers were sent in to do what damage they could; and they did a great deal. Next day, 1st June, the mist continued, closing down visibility to 3 miles. By 9 a.m. the destroyers had been recalled, the Grand Fleet was reunited, and returned to its bases.

The British losses were 3 battle-cruisers, *Queen Mary*, *Indefatigable*, and *Invincible*; 3 Armoured Cruisers, *Defence*, *Black Prince*, and *Warrior*; and 8 destroyers. The admitted German losses were 1 battleship, *Pommern*; 1 battle-cruiser, *Lützow*; 4 light-cruisers, *Rostock*, *Frauenlob*, *Wiesbaden*, *Elbing*; and 5 destroyers. The British losses were, therefore, heavier than the Germans; the adverse balance arising from the early losses of the *Queen Mary* and the *Indefatigable*. Those losses must be partly attributed to good German gunnery, as must that of the *Invincible*, though in each a shell found its way to the magazine. It must be conceded, nevertheless, that Admiral von Tirpitz[1] lays stress on the better protection both against gunfire and below water of the German type of battleship and battle-cruiser; and the inference is that the 3 ships that Beatty and Hood lost were not so well protected above water as the German. This admission having been made, and proper credit having been given to the gunnery of what Baron Freytag von Loringhoven[2] called Germany's "belaurelled young fleet", the fact remains that in the essentials of a naval battle victory remained with the British fleet, which outmanœuvred and outfought the German squadrons, and left them no option other than a return to their harbours, from which they did not again emerge

[1] *My Memoirs*, by Admiral von Tirpitz. (Hurst & Blackett, 1919.)

[2] *Deductions from the World War*: Lieut.-General Freytag von Loringhoven. (Constable, 1919.)

as a fleet except to surrender. "Prisoners" and "guns" are the accepted evidences of a victory on land, and the destruction or capture of the enemy's ships are the aim of a commander in a naval battle. But, failing the opportunity to fight a naval battle to a finish, victory remains not with the commander who inflicts the greater damage on his adversary, but with the fleet which, after the engagement, is best capable of keeping the sea, and of forbidding its use to the enemy.

In the absence of any prospect of successfully engaging the British Grand Fleet, a contingency which the Battle of Jutland had dispelled, and which the German naval authorities quite well perceived, there was but one resource left to them, and that was to develop submarine warfare to its utmost. In pursuance of that policy it was incumbent on them not to risk their High Seas Fleet in another general engagement. While it was in harbour it was still powerful, because it *might* come out, and while that possibility existed, the British Grand Fleet could not dispense with the quota of destroyers necessary as screens for its battle squadrons. Consequently, the presence in German waters of the High Seas Fleet was a double support to the German submarine campaign. It aided the submarines' exits and entrances, and it removed from the seas the most competent enemies of the submarine, namely, hostile destroyers.

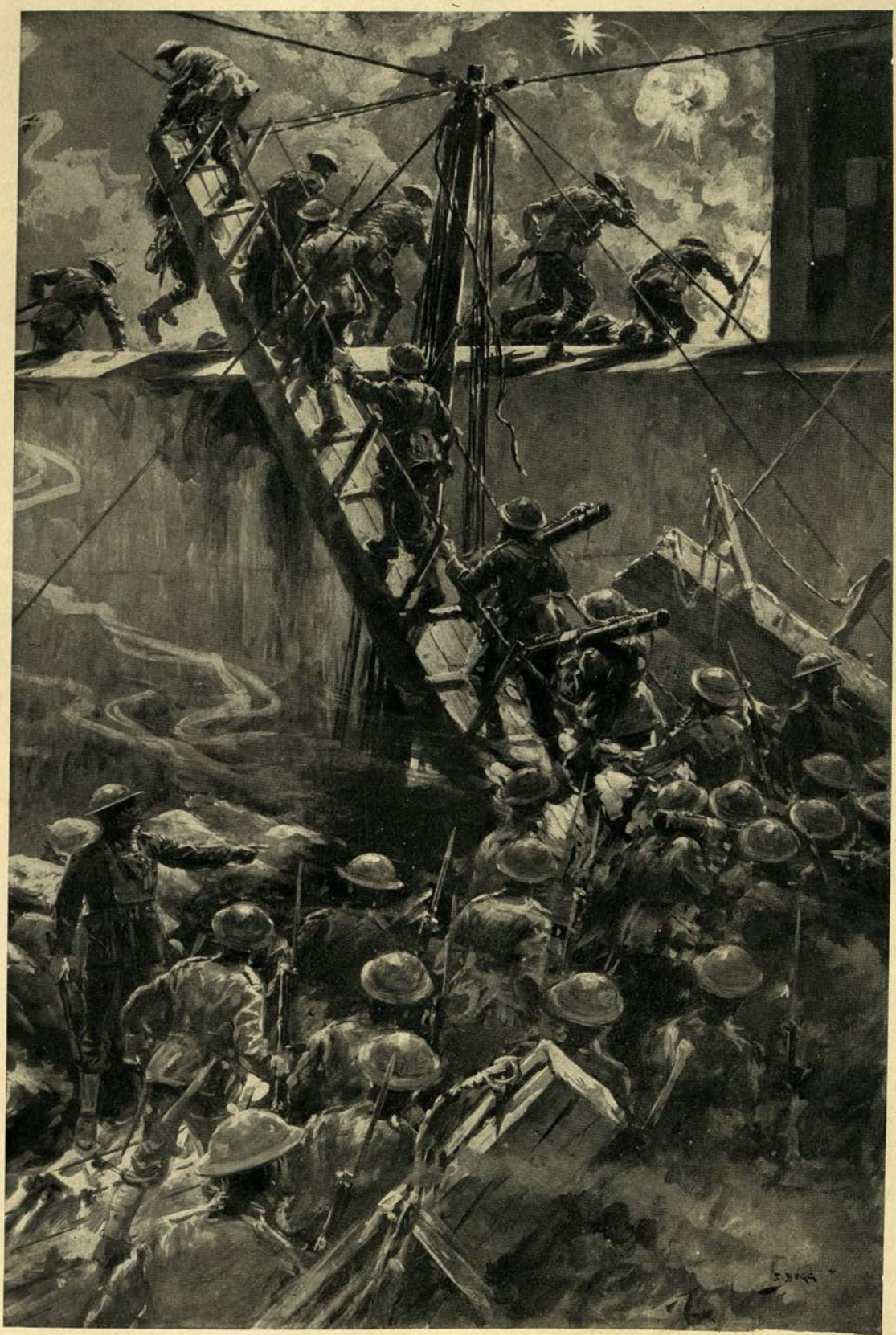
In the early stages of the war the German navy had attempted to use the submarine as a legal naval weapon, and with smaller U-boats than they afterwards constructed, had a measure of success which was largely due to insufficience of naval knowledge as to the possibilities. Thus the *Aboukir*, *Cressy*, and *Hogue* were torpedoed by *U9* in the North Sea on 22nd August off Holland, the *Cressy* being first struck, and the others while standing by her. Lieutenant-Commander Weddigen, commanding *U9*, afterwards torpedoed the *Hawke*. He lost his submarine and his life in a subsequent attempt on the Grand Fleet. The *Formidable* was torpedoed in the Channel on New Year's Day, 1915.

The submarine warfare against merchant ships had been active long before the Germans reached the decision to pursue it unrestrictedly. The *Lusitania* had been torpedoed on 7th May, 1915; and President Wilson had been exchanging Notes with the German Government for nearly a year on the subject of torpedoing without warning, when the destruction of the cross-Channel steamer *Sussex* (19th April, 1916) evoked from him a protest that hastened the breach between the United States and Germany, though it was not till 3rd February, 1917, that Count Bernstorff was dismissed from Washington, and not till 6th April, 1917, that the United States declared war on Germany. Nearly 2 million tons of shipping had been lost before that juncture. From the German side the history of the submarine campaign against merchant vessels is thus narrated by Admiral von Tirpitz:—It began in February, 1915, after three months discussions. A year later von Tirpitz pressed for its unlimited use, but his policy was then rejected. In February, 1917, it was opened. Apart from its effect on neutral shipping—Scandinavian, Dutch, or Spanish—which was employed in bringing supplies to the Allies, the losses by attrition of British and Allied ships were extremely serious, so serious in short that when Admiral Sims, representing the United States navy, arrived in Great Britain about the time of the United States declaration of war in 1917, he was frankly told by the British Admiralty and Lord Jellicoe that if the then rate of losses continued undiminished, Great Britain would be unable to continue the war with any prospect of success after 1st November, 1917.[1]

The chief reason for the immunity of the German submarine was the absence of a sufficient number of destroyers; a second reason was that the convergence of inward-bound ships to Liverpool and the Channel afforded the U-boats an easy and continual target. The remedies suggested were two, the first a larger supply of destroyers; the second the adoption of the convoy system with protective screens of destroyers. The United States navy sent over to Great Britain her destroyer squadrons,[2] which

[1] Article by Admiral Sims in *Pearson's Magazine*, October, 1919.

[2] In all 79 U.S. destroyers.



*Drawn by S. Begg*

THE NAVAL RAID ON ZEEBRUGGE MOLE

Marines and bluejackets landing from H.M.S. *Vindictive*

released more British destroyers for U-boat hunting, for convoy screening, and for the protection of transports and hospital ships, the latter of which were not immune from U-boat attack; and after some hesitations the convoy system was whole-heartedly adopted by the mercantile marine. The diminution in the U-boat successes was remarkable; the six months in which the German Admiralty, basing prediction on mathematical calculations of sinkings, had promised the Reichstag that the war would be over, receded farther and farther, and the losses of German U-boats by capture and depth-charges became formidable. (In August, 1918, these were announced to number more than 150, and in the whole war they amounted to more than 200.) This reversal of expectations took the Germans by surprise. So confident had they been of the decisive effect of U-boat warfare that in the earlier period of the United States entry into the war they deliberately neglected to attack American transports, because they did not believe American troops would arrive in Europe in sufficient numbers to affect the war before the issue was decided.

The submarine warfare and the struggle against it, which included the employment of "Q"-boats, or mystery ships, remained therefore, during the latter half of 1916, the whole of 1917, and a part of 1918, the salient feature of naval operations, though coincident with it were the ceaseless work of the patrols; the incessant blockade by mines and more active measures of the Central Powers, and their adherents, Turkey and Bulgaria. In respect of Turkey mention must be made of the sortie by the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, which had been in the service of the Porte since August 1914. The *Breslau* sank after striking a mine; the *Goeben* escaped, getting back to the Bosphorus much damaged, after a similar accident.

Some of the finest work of the naval war was the ceaseless task of the Dover Patrol, responsible for the safety and welfare of the transport of men and supplies to and from France; and in these operations may be embraced the fight of the *Swift* and *Broke* [1] with German destroyers, and the continual bombardment of the Belgian coast by monitors. It was part of the Dover Patrol's work to watch the outlet of German submarines from the Bruges depot through Zeebrugge and Ostend. Various plans were considered for the reduction of these U-boat *points-d'appui*, the most attractive of which was a combined land and sea operation. This broke down owing to the German land attack on the coastal sector in 1917, and it was left to the navy, after examining alternative plans, to adopt that proposed by Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, who succeeded Vice-Admiral Bacon in command at Dover (January, 1918). The plan in its broader outline had received the approval of Sir J. Jellicoe. On the night of 22nd April, after more than one rehearsal, and after the most precise elaboration of plans, a raid of the most daring and ingenious kind was made on Zeebrugge and Ostend. The chief ship of the flotilla which set out was the old 5000 ton cruiser *Vindictive* (Captain Carpenter). She was accompanied by 3 other old ships, *Thetis*, *Intrepid*, and *Iphigenia*, which it was intended to use as block ships for sinking in the entrance at Zeebrugge, and the ferry boats *Iris* and *Daffodil*. An old submarine, *C 3*, was also taken, and charged with explosives, the intention being to ram her underneath the viaduct connecting Zeebrugge harbour with the Mole, and then blow her up. In addition, were a fleet of motor launches, some alloted to the attack on Zeebrugge, some to that on Ostend; and a large number of coastal motor-boats, as well as a flotilla of destroyers in support. The attempt was supported, when the precise moment came, by a continuous bombardment from a squadron of monitors out at sea. A feature of the attack was the smoke screen devised by Commander Brock, who lost his life in the landing operations.

The forces met at their rendezvous about 15 miles out at sea at midnight, and then parted for their twin enterprise, the *Vindictive* going towards Zeebrugge with her companions, and the *Sirius* and *Brilliant* two other blockships, towards Ostend. The

[1] In this engagement 3 British destroyers, of which the *Swift* and *Broke* were a new type, routed 5 German destroyers. The *Broke* (Commander Evans) torpedoed one and rammed another

German garrison at Zeebrugge did not perceive the *Vindictive* till she was 400 yards away, and in less than five minutes she was alongside the Mole. She was kept in position there by the little *Daffodil*, and the *Iris* also sat down close to the Mole. Landing parties jumped ashore to do what damage they could; and the submarine *C* 3 was successfully blown up underneath the viaduct. Meanwhile the blockships were being rammed at the entrance. The *Thetis* fouled the protecting nets as she burst the dock-gate, but gave the line to her companions, the *Intrepid* and the *Iphigenia*, both of which got into the channel, and were here successfully blown up, completely blocking the fairway. The task was done; and what was even more remarkable, the *Vindictive* was taken successfully away, as were the *Iris* and the *Daffodil*, which, like the motor-boats, did remarkable service in picking up and taking away those who lived to tell the story of the great feat.

At Ostend, owing to the removal of a buoy, the precise way was lost, and the *Sirius* and the *Brilliant* both had to be beached and sunk outside the harbour; but three weeks later the commander of the *Brilliant* (Commander Godsal) was given a second chance, as was Lieutenant-Commander Hardy of the *Sirius*. These two officers took the *Vindictive*, patched up again, and the *Sappho*, on the night of 9th May; and the *Vindictive* was sunk 200 yards up the channel of Ostend. Unhappily, Commander Godsal was killed by a shell, just after the task had been performed. The *Sappho* had to stop owing to boiler trouble.

This was almost the last great event of the naval warfare, unless the arrival and assistance of the United States navy's invaluable help be counted as a decisive act in 1918. The German fleet was confidently expected to come out by Sir David Beatty, who succeeded Admiral Lord Jellicoe as Commander-in-Chief; but its only appearance was after the Armistice, according to the terms of which Germany surrendered 10 battleships, 6 battle-cruisers, 3 light-cruisers, 50 destroyers, and all the submarines. The historic act took place on 21st November, 1918, when the main instalment of the German High Seas Fleet was surrendered to the British Grand Fleet under Sir David Beatty at the Firth of Forth. An American squadron, with Admiral Sims, representing the United States navy, and a French armoured cruiser, with Rear-Admiral Grasset, were present.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TURKEY AND THE WAR

On either side of the chief antagonists of the war were two schools, "Westerners", and "Easterners", the first of whom believed that the decisive battle must be fought on that Western Front where the main forces of the deciding factors, namely Great Britain, were assembled; and consequently that all other campaigns should be reduced to the smallest commitment, and should only be embarked upon under compulsion of necessity. Lord Kitchener, Lord French, and Sir Douglas Haig were "Westerners", so, of necessity, were Generals Joffre and Foch; so also was von Falkenhayn, though the blow at Russia in the spring of 1915 was sanctioned and organized under his direction. He protested against further adventures in Russia, and in 1916, true to his conviction that if France and Great Britain were put out of the war, all other enemy Powers must collapse, directed the chief effort of Germany against the French at Verdun. Ludendorff, a converted Easterner, brought the full power of German arms to bear against the Allies on the Western Front too late. It is at least possible that had Germany from 1914 onwards concentrated her powers against the Western Front and acted on the defensive in the Eastern theatre, the effect, though dangerous to Austria-Hungary, would have been disastrous to the Allies.

But no one of the Powers was able to do

what military considerations alone dictated. Germany was inexorably bound to Austro-Hungarian requirements, and subsequently diverted part of her energies to Roumanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Turkish campaigns. The Allies similarly found themselves committed to war against Turkey, at the Dardanelles, in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine; and against Bulgaria in Macedonia. These commitments could not be avoided; but more than once, as in the Gallipoli campaign, the prospect of a valuable victory purchased cheaply allured Great Britain from the clearest and most direct path of military advantage. This was especially true in respect of the war against Turkey. Turkey entered the war (1st November, 1914), as an ally of Germany, some two months after the arrival at Constantinople of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, which escaped from Messina in August 1914, having been nominally sold to Turkey by Germany. As an enemy of Great Britain and of France, Turkey could not do very much; but she barred the way to communication with Russia through the Black Sea, and so prevented the interchange of supplies. She was, in short, Russia's enemy. Russia's heterogeneous Black Sea fleet was of little use against the one good German unit, the *Goeben*, a fast, powerful battle-cruiser, and the only way in which the Russians could come to grips with Turkey was by way of the Caucasus.

The Turkish armies were directed by General Liman von Sanders, and nominally by Enver Pasha, and 3 corps were sent to the Caucasus front. They were badly beaten in December, 1914, by superior Russian generalship and knowledge of mountain fighting. The Russians advanced to railhead from Tiflis, and on 29th, 30th, 31st December destroyed Enver Pasha's expeditionary force. One Turkish corps was surrounded and cut off at Sarikamish; another badly mauled; and the remainder driven back on to the roads to Erzerum and Erzingan. The victory would have been yet more complete if it could have been pursued: but there was no transport available in that rail-less country at that time of year for an invading army. It was not, in fact, till 1916, after the Grand Duke Nicholas had been appointed (September, 1915) Viceroy of the Caucasus that his Chief of Staff, General Yudenitch, began an invasion of Turkey in Asia. (The expedition drove back the Turkish forces on Erzerum, and captured it on 16th February. The Russians took many prisoners and a number of guns. But it was April, 1916, before they captured Trebizond, on the Black Sea front, and though they spread southwards and eastwards to Bitlis and Mush and Lake Van, the attempt expired of the inanition which began to seize Russia in that year.)

Before, however, this invasion had been projected, the Grand Duke Nicholas had been urgent in pressing on his Western Allies the desirability of aiding Russia by attacking the Turks at the Dardanelles. This was one of the origins of the operations: the others were the belief of the Secretary of the Admiralty (Mr. Winston Churchill) in the possibility and advantages of success. Lord Fisher and Lord Kitchener were not convinced: and to the half-heartedness in which the preliminary operations were undertaken may be attributed in some part the failure. The naval attack in February and March, 1915, of which mention has been made[1] robbed the enterprise of surprise; and Lord Kitchener, when, on the representations of Sir Ian Hamilton, a combined military and naval attack had been projected, was reluctant at first to spare the 29th Division which afterwards took part in it.

Sir Ian Hamilton's force consisted eventually of the 29th Division, the Australian and New Zealand (Anzac) Corps, the East Lancashire Territorial Division, and part of the Royal Naval Division. A French colonial corps under General D'Amade co-operated. Sir Ian Hamilton, who witnessed the naval attempt of March, decided to land his force on the top of the Gallipoli peninsula, rightly rejecting any attempt on the opposite side of the Narrows, and also deciding against an attack higher up the peninsula at Bulair. He also decided that his troops were not properly distributed in their transports and a further delay occurred while they were re-arranged.

[1] See p. 257.

Ultimately the landing was made on 25th April at five beaches, V, W, X, with S and Y on the flanks, and at Gaba Tepe, farther north, to which the Anzac Corps was sent.

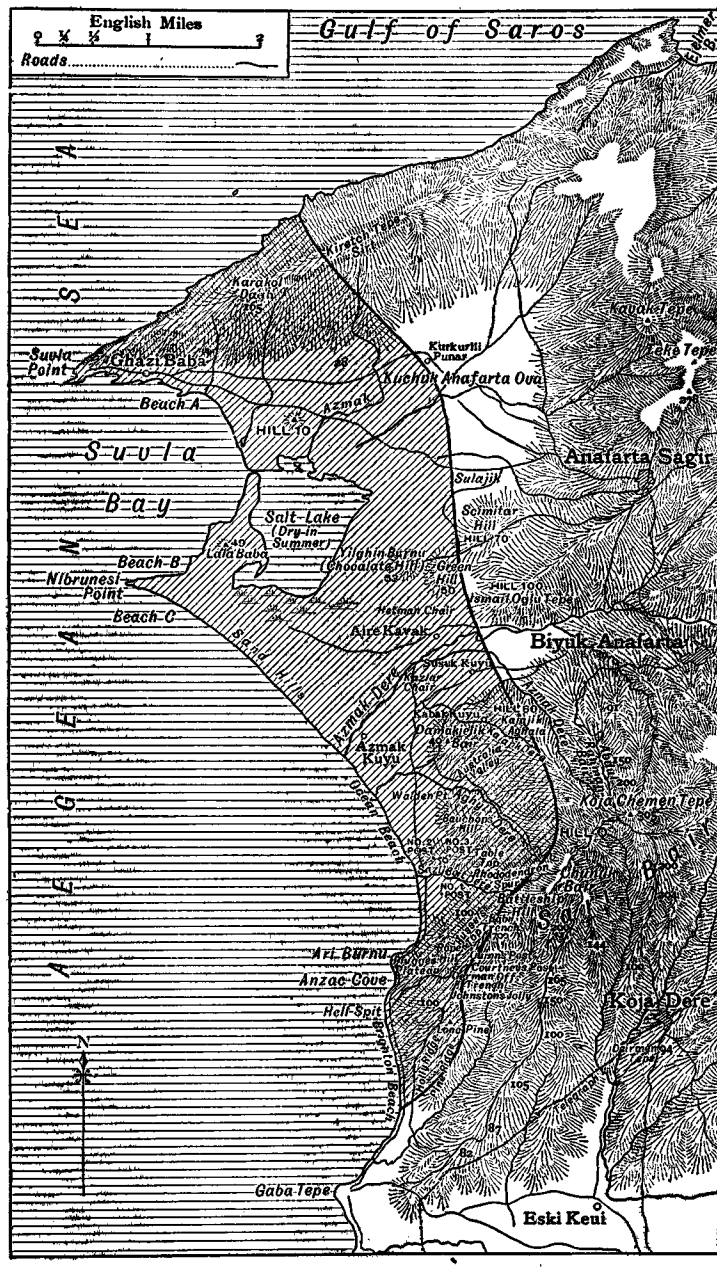
The transports with the troops had arrived on the previous night; the landing forces were transferred to naval boats, and it was under the protection of the fleet's guns that the landings were made in the early morning. On one flanking beach the landing was made easily; on another the men had to re-embark. At the X, W, and V beaches the landings were made by the display of the greatest resolution and ingenuity (especially at V beach, where a collier, the *River Clyde*, played the part of the Trojan horse): but the losses were considerable. The Anzacs at Gaba Tepe had landed a mile north of the selected spot, and, pushing forward with great determination, made good their foothold, putting 12,000 men ashore in eight hours. A footing was thus gained on a narrow strip of the peninsula; it was enlarged next day; and on the 28th, the French Corps having been brought across from the other side of the Narrows to assist, Sir Ian Hamilton ordered a general advance towards the dominating height of Achi Baba. The 29th Division was placed on the left, inclining towards Krithia; the French corps was directed towards the redoubts of Kereves Dere. It soon became apparent that just as the gunnery of the Turks and their ability to shell the landing beaches had been underestimated, so the effectiveness of their fortified and machine-gun armed trenches had also been underrated.

Achi Baba was a Turkish Verdun: and after two attempts to rush it had failed, evidence accumulated with every subsequent attempt that it could be stormed only at a ruinous cost. Such evidence was forthcoming on May 6, when reinforcements of Australians, Indians, the Naval Brigade, and part of the East Lancashire Division furnished material for a renewal of the attack, which was continued in hard slogging on the 8th and 9th, while the assailing force was still short of Krithia and Kereves Dere. The fighting in the rest of May and June, both at the top of the Peninsula and above Gaba Tepe, where General Birdwood commanded the Anzac Corps, was a recapitulation, with variations of Tantalus-like successes leading to nothing decisive, of the first weeks. Successes were gained by the Anzacs on 29th May, by the French Corps on 4th and 21st June; by the 29th Division on 28th June; and every attempt of the Turks to counter-attack was stamped out. But all the time the British and French losses were mounting, and the trying climate, the flies which spread dysentery, and the perpetual shelling, were taking a heavy toll of valuable lives. The conditions under which the campaign was fought by the British were execrable; it is surprising that the troops bore it so well. The Naval forces, the earlier operations of which are referred to on p. 257, were placed in almost as disadvantageous a position when enemy submarines appeared: the *Queen Elizabeth* was sent home just in time. The *Goliath*, the *Triumph* and *Majestic*, 3 old battleships, were torpedoed: the first-named with a loss of 500 men. The British submarines with fewer targets and incomparably greater difficulties, were able to retaliate by creeping up the Narrows and torpedoing a Turkish battleship, gunboats and transports.

In the middle of May General Gouraud took over the French command from General d'Amade, but was badly wounded by a shell on 30th June and returned to France. During the months of June and July the war on the peninsula was prosecuted with frequent vigour, but always at a cost disproportionate to the results attained. During July a new plan was elaborated by General Ian Hamilton, and 3 fresh divisions from Great Britain were requisitioned to carry it into effect. They were fewer than asked for, and they were not seasoned troops. The plan was to land a force at Anzac to cooperate with the Australian and New Zealand forces in seizing the heights of Sari Bair, whence an advance would be made across the waist of the peninsula. Two divisions were simultaneously to be landed 4 miles north at Suvla Bay to support the left flank of the Anzac thrust. Continuous small attacks, and one on a larger scale at Cape Helles (on 6th August) were made to divert Turkish attention, and on 4th, 5th,

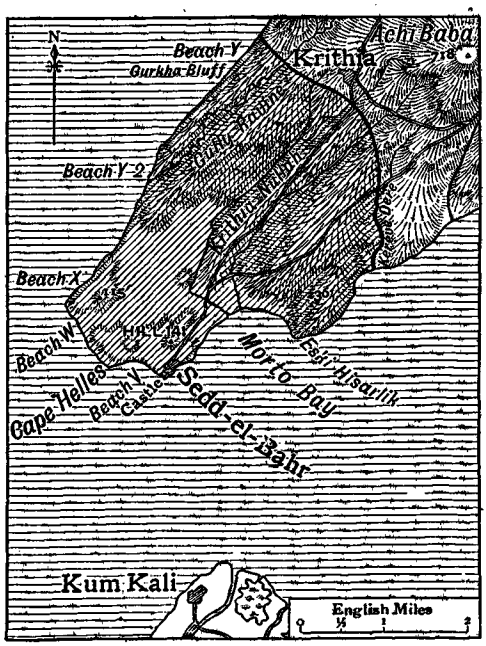
and 6th August the reinforcements at Anzac were successfully landed, bringing up the force under General Birdwood to some 36,000 men. The force (9th Corps) to land at Suvla Bay was under the command of General Sir F. Stopford, with General Hammersley (11th Division), and General Sir B. Mahon (10th Division), as divisional leaders. Hammersley landed his 3 brigades on the night of 6th August, and secured a foothold to the north. General Mahon's division landed next day, 7th August.

The country at Anzac where the attack was made was like that farther north, very difficult, and the operation was begun on the night of 6th August to gain the advantage of surprise. Four columns, under General Godley, went forward, the right hand column to scale the ridges ending with Chunuk Bair, the left hand moving over easier ground towards Koja Chemen Tepe. There were obvious dangers of misdirection, and in spite of hard fighting, the night of the 7th found the columns approaching their objectives and in touch with one another, but still short both of Koja and Chunuk. Before dawn of the 8th a dash was made for Chunuk, which was seized, but could not be held. The Turks had become fully awake to the situation, and were determined to dispute the ground to the uttermost. They sent in counter-attack after counter-attack; and by 10th August all the valour of Aus-




The Suvla and Anzac Line: map showing approximately by the shaded portion the area occupied after the linking up of the two armies in August, 1915

tralians and New Zealanders, Gurkhas, Wiltshires, Worcestershires, and Lancashires, had been unable to effect more than a hold on the ridges, but on neither of the main objectives. The failure to take Koja had reacted on the position at Chunuk Bair, and the failure at Koja had been due to the want of co-operative support from the attack farther north at Suvla. The 13th Division




Map showing approximately the Area in the Southern Zone evacuated in January, 1916

had lost 6000 men; the total casualties were double that.

The failure at Suvla arose from various causes. The chief of them was the failure of Hammersley's 11th Division to advance on 8th August, and this was partly owing to differences of opinion between two of the brigadier-generals, Sitwell and Hill, and partly to the fact that the lack of water had exhausted the troops. General Ian Hamilton, hearing of the failure, steamed to Suvla, and arriving there early on the 8th found General Stopford powerless to exert the necessary driving power. He himself does not seem to have supplied the omission, and it was not till the morning of the 9th that the 32nd Brigade was sent forward. By that time it was too late. The Turks sent up reinforcements and stiffened their resistance. Two new divisions, 54th and 53rd (Territorial), were sent up on the 10th, but neither effected anything of tactical or strategic value, though not for want of courage and devotion. It was all too late; the give and take struggles had supervened, and General Stopford's force continued to fight a defensive rather than an attacking battle till 15th August, when General de Lisle took over the command of the 9th Corps. Lord Kitchener declined to send more reinforcements from home; and General Ian Hamilton, moving round the 29th Division from Imbros to Suvla, and calling up other reinforcements from Egypt, made one more attempt on 21st August. It failed, though supported by the greatest gallantry on the part of the 29th Division, and the Yeomanry—which reinforced it.

The 11th Division, which also took part in the frontal attack, was held up. It was a day of heavy losses, especially among the leaders. A supporting attack made from Anzac gained ground, and did so slowly for several days, but by 24th August it was clear that nothing more could be won without further reinforcements. As the Report of the Dardanelles Commission (December, 1919), observed, after General de Lisle replaced Sir F. Stopford the fighting was of a defensive character. It remained so, and meanwhile sickness increased, due partly to climate, partly to want of prevision in the medical arrangements. General Byng occupied a command for some time in September, succeeding General de Lisle, but in truth the Dardanelles campaign was at an end. It lingered on for some months: but on 15th October Sir Ian Hamilton was relieved of his command, and Sir Charles Monro, who was sent out, reported in favour of evacuation of the peninsula. This decision was confirmed by Lord Kitchener, who himself went to Gallipoli, and the evacuation was carried out with the most remarkable success—in fact nothing so became our conduct of the Gallipoli campaign as the manner of our leaving it—on 18th December and 8th January. Our casualties amounted to 31,389 killed, 78,749

wounded, and 9708 missing. From first to last we used 400,000 men in it, and the one redeeming feature is that some 300,000 Turks were similarly detained, and suffered losses of the same order.

The Mesopotamian campaign was one which ended differently for Great Britain, but in its middle history was clouded by disasters arising from the same fault of underestimating the enemy. A small British force was sent from India to the Persian Gulf early in the war to protect British interests (including oil), and in November the force, increased to 3 brigades (General Barrett), occupied Basra (22nd November), and pushed northwards to the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates. The British positions were repeatedly attacked during the winter, and in April, 1915, the reinforcements which had reached Sir John Nixon, who took command in January, seemed to justify an advance. A column was despatched under General Gorringe to Ahwaz, on the oil-pipe line, and another under General Townshend began to advance up the river. On April 14th the Turks were beaten at Shaiba, south of Kurna (the junction of the rivers), and on 31st May at Kurna. Townshend pushed on to Amara on the Tigris, and occupied it on 3rd June, and in the next month Gorringe, pushing to the west up the Euphrates, heavily defeated the Turks at Nasiriyeh (24th July). At this time the Russians were on the upper Euphrates, and there were some indistinct prospects of easily driving the Turks out of Mesopotamia.

Nasiriyeh is at the south end of an old channel, the Shatt-el-Hai, joining the Euphrates to the Tigris at Kut, and on 1st August it was decided to send General Townshend forward to seize Kut if possible. In six weeks he traversed the difficult country, his transport moving in part by the river, and he was in striking distance of the town and of the Turkish forces commanded by Nur-ed-Din Bey on 15th September. Townshend's attack, a brilliant affair, was made on the 27th–28th. On the 27th he had 1 brigade on the left bank of the Tigris, 2 on the right; the Turks therefore anticipated an attack on the right bank. In the night the 2 right bank brigades were transferred to be used in an inner and outer flanking manœuvre (Hoghton), while Townshend, with his original left bank brigade (Fry), fiercely attacked the Turkish centre. Fry's brigade broke in, and the brigades of Hoghton and Delamain, notwithstanding their exhausting march, completed the victory by falling on the Turkish reserves as they came up. The British losses were under 500: the Turkish prisoners numbered 1600, and the remnants of Nur-ed-Din's force fled up the river.

Bagdad is no more than 90 miles from Kut in a direct line, and General Townshend was encouraged by the optimism of his superior officer, General Sir John Nixon, to attempt to push on there. His transport, his forces, and, as it turned out, his medical equipment, were insufficient for the task. He pushed on by a four days' march to Azizieh, and learnt that the Turks were entrenched at Ctesiphon, 25 miles south of Bagdad. He was aware of the insufficiency of his force to give battle, and, in reply to his representations, received from General Nixon an infantry brigade, cavalry, and artillery. With these Townshend advanced on Ctesiphon, and after a night march attacked the first Turkish lines as early as 22nd November. The main position was carried, and the assaulters advanced under heavy fire on the second line of defences. On these they could make little impression, and the Turkish counter-attacks soon demonstrated that the surprise was not wholly of British making. Nur-ed-Din Bey had, in short, retired on his supports, and on the 23rd these came up from Bagdad in great strength to renew progressively heavier counter-attacks. Townshend hung on for two more days, losing a third of his strength; and then (25th November) had no option but to retreat, which he did by way of Azizieh, taking his 1300 Turkish prisoners with him. He had to fight hard rear-guard actions throughout the retreat, suffering 4500 casualties, and losing 3 of his transport gun-boats, *Firefly*, *Comet*, and *Shaitan*, in the Tigris.

He reached Kut on 3rd December, and

by the 5th the Turks, distributing 4 divisions on three sides of it, had invested it. Their attacks began on the 8th December, and a three days' assault was then followed by a more violent one on 23rd December, which penetrated the north-eastern corner of the defences. The assailants were thrown out by Oxford Light Infantry, and thereafter sat down to starve out the British. The siege which Townshend's division endured in Kut was one of miserable circumstances, and was redeemed only by the spirit of the defenders. In the confined surroundings, with insufficient and improper food, and with hope of relief continually deferred, they kept the flag flying for 145 days, till 29th April, 1916, when the last likely attempt to relieve the garrison having failed, Townshend surrendered to Khalil Pasha. The remnants of the garrison were at first well treated by the enemy, but their transfer, mainly on foot, through Mesopotamia and Anatolia to Constantinople, was a disgrace to the Turks, and a tragedy for the bulk of the unfortunate British and Indians who were at their mercy.

The first movements of the relief force were made by Generals Younghusband and Aylmer on 3rd January, 1916, whose forces included 2 Indian divisions. The march was made during the flood months of winter, and encountered successive lines of Turkish entrenchments, which could not be turned because they rested on swamps on the north side of the river. The exigencies of transport limited Aylmer's advance to the line of the Tigris, and compelled him to attack these positions frontally. He carried the Sheikh Saad trenches on 8th January, but could make no impression on the Um-el-Hanna position to which the Turks retired. Having reorganized his transport, he then made the attempt to strike across the desert on the south side of the Tigris towards the Es-Sinn position, which proved the most formidable barrier drawn by the Turks in the southern front of Kut, and which, 7 miles below the town, stretched for 16 miles from the Tigris to the Shatt-el-Hai. The night march began on 7th March, was carried out with great secrecy and ability, and brought the British forces within striking distance of the position, including its key, the Dujailah Redoubt, at dawn on the 8th. Younghusband's division was near the river; columns under Kemball and Keary were to move so as to outflank the Turkish right; Keary's column got into position in good time; Kemball's was late: and from a frank consideration of the reports of the battle the conclusion emerges that Kemball missed a golden opportunity to rush the Dujailah Redoubt.[1] The attack was held up: the surprise had vanished: and General Aylmer had no other course than to withdraw to the Um-el-Hanna positions. He was an unlucky general. General Gorringe succeeded him: and under the new commander the positions at Um-el-Hanna and Felahieh were taken in April, 1916.

There was no hope of relieving Townshend, and no reason for risks, so that action now wore a more leisurely aspect. General Gorringe improved his position at El Sinn; the May operations were then suspended; and General Stanley Maude succeeded to the command in August. General Maude rectified the grosser scandals of transport and medical supplies, and began his campaign against the Turks by a wholesale and necessary reorganization of his communications, in which he included light railways from Basra. He made his first move forward on 12th December, 1916, when, while demonstrating on the Sanna-i-Yat positions (which were drawn across the Tigris), he sent General Marshall on a night march to clear the Shatt-el-Hai. Thenceforward the history of the Mesopotamian campaign was that of the success of General Maude's deliberate, bold, but prudent generalship. After a brief pause, General Marshall's force crossed the Shatt-el-Hai, and pressed towards Kut on that side of the channel till it enclosed the Turkish force in the Dehra loop, west of Kut and above it. By 15th–16th January, 1917, all the Turks were here driven north of the Tigris and 2000 prisoners taken. All this time General Cobbe was pinning the Turks to their Sanna-i-Yat position east of and below Kut. A week later, when

[1] Sir Percy Lake's Despatch. Sir Percy Lake succeeded Sir John Nixon in January, 1916.

*British Official Photograph*

THE LIBERATION OF JERUSALEM

General Allenby making his official entry into the Holy City on 11 December, 1917

Marshall was threatening to cross to the north bank of the Tigris, Khalil Pasha began precipitately to evacuate Kut, and while Marshall crossed the Tigris on 23rd February, Cobbe cleared the last defences of Sanna-i-Yat, and drove the Turks up river towards his coadjutor, who had won bridgeheads on the Tigris, and who now attempted to cut across the Turkish retreat. The Turkish rear-guards held Marshall up for a time, but then threw up the task and scattered leaving guns, baggage, gunboats, and prisoners behind. The pursuit was continued as far as Azizieh.

It was resumed on 5th March. Lajj was passed, and Ctesiphon; and on the Diala in front of Bagdad, and 8 miles from it, Maude repeated the tactics which had manœuvred the Turks out of Kut. Cobbe's force, or a part of it, crossed the Tigris from the east bank to the west (8th), while Marshall, having crossed the Diala, seized and held the ridge of Tel Muhammed which defends Bagdad on the eastern bank. The Turks had no fight left in them, and Bagdad was entered by the British on 11th March.

From Bagdad one line of railway runs westwards towards Feludja on the Euphrates; another north-westwards to Samarra, the place where, formerly, the Berlin-Bagdad railway had been destined to join it. Both places were seized before the heat of summer stopped large operations. The Turkish army had been destroyed as a unit, and distributed in fragments, more or less out of reach, some in the Jebel Hamrin hills, one force at Ramadie. Late in September, as the weather cooled, a cleverly-planned march, entrusted by General Maude to a column under General Brooking, captured the whole of the Ramadie force, together with its commander, Ahmed Bey; and the following month the Jebel Hamrin hills were cleared, and the Turkish base at Tekrit destroyed. Sir Stanley Maude's work had been done: he was one of the generals produced by the war to whose high qualities of foresight and decision the word brilliant could truly be applied. Unhappily, he died in the moment of victory, falling a victim to cholera on 18th November, 1917. He was succeeded by his able lieutenant, General Marshall, who carried on his work with the same prudence as his leader, but whose opportunities for action were more limited. In 1918 Marshall occupied Hit on the Euphrates, and drove the Turks past Anah and Kirkak, on the Tigris, and ended his campaign immediately before the Armistice, with a crushing victory 50 miles south of Mosul.

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The Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Pasha, who had, as Lord Cromer bore witness, been long restive under British tutelage, declared for the Central Powers shortly after Turkey, the Sultan of which was nominally his suzerain, had entered the war, and left the country. Prince Hussein was made Sultan of Egypt instead, and the country became a British Protectorate. In the subsequent operations the Egyptian army was not, however, called on to fight, and the campaigns in defence of Egypt were fought by Imperial divisions and British Indian forces. These campaigns were fought chiefly against the Turks, though, at the end of 1915, the Senussi—old desert fighters of the British—became very active on the western border, and owed their belligerence to German inspiration and assistance. The actions (23rd January and 26th February, 1916), undertaken against them demanded considerable and sustained energy on the part of a column commanded by General Lukin, who occupied Sollum, on the borders of Tripoli (14th March, 1916), which the Senussi had captured, and drove them back from the coast into the Libyan desert plateau, where they were pursued and routed by a fleet of armoured motor-cars under the Duke of Westminster.

The major operations of the Turks against Egypt began with a daring attempt by Djemal Pasha to bring a force 150 miles across the Sinai Peninsula to attack the Suez Canal. The force made the trying journey, and was in a position to attack Ismailia and the Bitter Lakes on the night of 2nd February, 1915. As General Marshall, in command of ample troops, Australians and British in training, was quite prepared, the assault was a ludicrous failure. By the 4th the Turks were retreating, and General Marshall did not feel it incumbent on him to organize a

pursuit. Beyond occasional threats of raids no further Turkish attempt was made during 1915—the year of the Gallipoli campaign; but in April, 1916, a Turkish advanced base was established at El Arish, on the Mediterranean coast of the Sinai Peninsula, and another advance was prepared. This was delayed some time owing to Turkish difficulties in the Hejaz, the Arab territory ruled by the Sultan of Turkey on the Red Sea; and it was not till August that the attempt matured.

On 4th August this well-equipped expedition, 18,000 strong, was encountered by the British forces (Australians and New Zealanders, Yeomanry, Territorials, and the 52nd Division) near Katia. The Turks were handsomely beaten, and retired with a loss of 4000 prisoners and 4 guns. Bir-el-Abd was captured by General Sir A. Murray's force, and on 21st December El Arish was occupied. This was the first step in the invasion of Palestine, carefully prepared by the construction of "road and pipe and line". The desert column which struck across from Ismailia to El Arish was led by General Dobell; the mounted troops and camel corps were under General Chetwode. A Turkish camp was captured at Magdabar, and on 9th January, 1917, the desert column reached Rafa, the port on the southern border of Palestine. The railway line was following the advance, and by the middle of March it, too, had reached Rafa; and, with good communications behind him, General Sir A. Murray began his advance on Gaza.

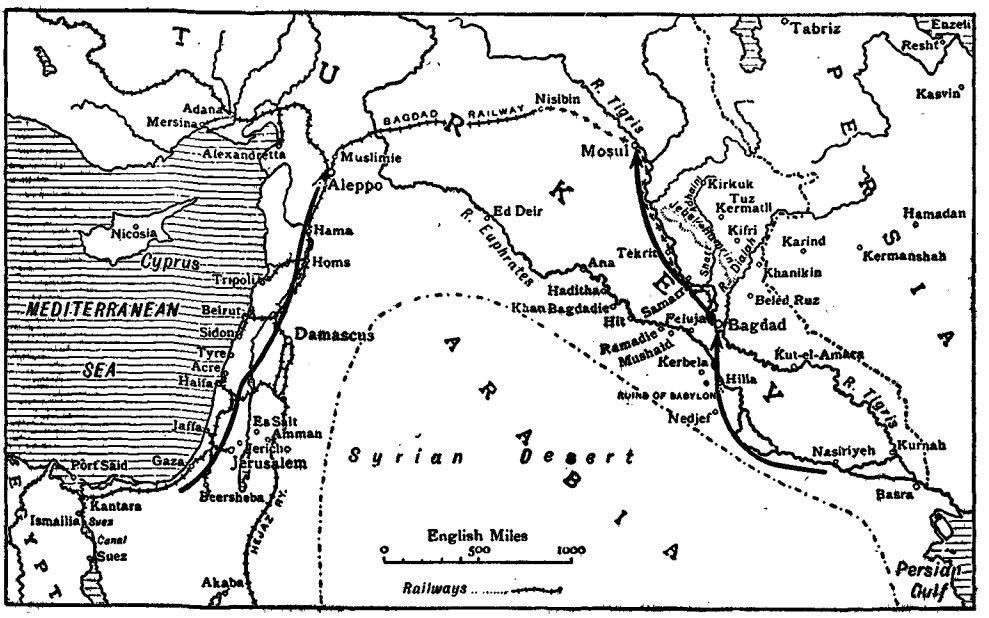
Gaza was a disappointment. The British force moved on the town, keeping near the coast, on 20th March, and delivered an attack on the Turkish positions running along the Wadi Ghuzzee towards Beersheba in the early morning of the 26th. The Australian mounted forces, and the Imperial mounted division and Camel Corps, moved off in two concentric circles to the east to outflank the town, while the 53rd and 54th Territorial Divisions attacked the main Turkish positions near Ali Muntar, which was carried after hard fighting. The Australian mounted forces had meanwhile made their detour, and were fighting in Gaza itself when the main attack was suspended for the day. The positions won by the infantry were not consolidated, and farther advance was deferred till next morning. It was then too late, because Turkish reinforcements had come up, and the British water supply had not. The promising opportunity came, therefore, to nothing. On 17th April, having got his pipe line and water supplies, as well as another division from Egypt, General Murray made a second attempt. It failed, and having cost a good many casualties was not renewed.

General Dobell was relieved of his command, and General Sir A. Murray was afterwards succeeded by General Sir Edmund Allenby, who was sent out to command the further operations when the definite conquest of Palestine was decided on. General Allenby made no move of importance till 31st October, when he surprised the Turks by making a sudden diversion towards Beersheba, while demonstrating towards Gaza. The Australians rushed the town, taking 2000 prisoners. Allenby's right being thus secured he sent the 52nd Division next day against a point between Gaza and the sea, while occupying Ali Muntar. Allenby was well supplied with guns, and with these two vantage points in his possession shelled the Turks out of their positions. They hurriedly abandoned Gaza (7th November), and in disorderly flight were pursued through Ascalon and Ashdod, and through Jaffa (16th November), whence a railway runs to Jerusalem. The advance along the coast was more rapid than through the hilly country between Beersheba and Jerusalem, but when Hebron was reached on 7th December the fate of the Holy City was sealed. Fortunately it fell without a siege—though the Turkish forces made a stand on 8th December—and on 9th December General Allenby entered it on foot through the Jaffa Gate, accompanied by representatives of France and Italy.

The victory thus signalized could not immediately be followed up, because impending events in France and Flanders made it imperative that British commitments in Palestine should not imperil further the position of the Allies in resisting the great German onslaught which General Luden-

dorff was preparing. At the end of March some of Allenby's advanced troops crossed the Jordan, but the operations on that side could not be pressed with success; and some of the best divisions were peremptorily recalled to France during the early summer. They were replaced by Indian divisions; and by the middle of September the forces had been reorganized, and held a line running from Arsuf north of Jaffa to the Jordan crossing north-east of Jericho, and thence the range that runs from Mont Carmel to Samaria.

Meanwhile, another infantry attack nearer to the Jordan first pinned the Turkish Eighth Army to its positions, and then broke it. The Turks began at once to retreat, but it was too late. The tremendous turning movement of the cavalry did not pause at the passes of Megiddo, but debouched through these into the plain of Esdraelon, where lie Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee,




The Last Phase of the Campaign against the Turks: map showing the converging lines of the main British advances in Mesopotamia and Palestine at the points reached on October 31, 1918

south to the Dead Sea. They were faced by the Turkish Seventh and Eighth Armies posted strongly in front of Shechem, and by the Turkish Fourth Army east of the Jordan.

Allenby's great attack began on the morning of 19th September, and was aimed, in the first place, at the costal sector where, behind the infantry, Australian Light Horse, Indian Cavalry and British Yeomanry regiments had been concentrated. Supported by a heavy artillery preparation the frontal attack by the infantry pierced the Turkish lines, and through the gap thus opened the cavalry swept north across the Plain of Sharon to seize the passes at Megiddo in and in a day and a half was right across every line of retreat of the Turks on the western side of Jordan. In the net of its advance it took Nazareth, which was the General Headquarters of the German director of Turkish operations, General Liman von Sanders, who escaped with not many hours to spare.

Far otherwise was the fate of the Turkish armies. A cavalry movement by the Arab allies[1] of the British under the Emir Feisul, son of the King of the Hejaz, had repeated on the east bank of the Jordan the turning operations on the west. Avoiding the strong Turkish force at Rabboth Amman the Emir

[1] These had been largely organized by Temp. Col. T. E. Lawrence.

cut the Hejaz railway line which runs north to Damascus at Deraa. The Turkish Fourth Army had meanwhile lingered too long, opposing the British crossing of the Jordan till 22nd September, and still offering opposition at Es Salt on the 23rd. The resistance was their undoing, for they fell between the anvil of the British infantry and the hammer of the Arab and Indian cavalry. To these was added the scourge of the aeroplanes which, along the mountainous roads and in the passes, bombed the retreat at will. In less than a week the Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies ceased to exist, and the number of prisoners leapt up by tens of thousands in a day. Some 10,000 of the Fourth Army surrendered south of Rabboth Amman on 29th September.

Haifa and Acre on the coast, and Tiberias on the Lake of Galilee, were surrendered as fast as the British cavalry could reach them; and on 1st October the Australians had entered the capital city of Damascus. The Arab forces under the Emir Feisul reached there practically at the same time, and the Emir was made governor of the city. Beirut fell a few days later, and before the end of October General Allenby's troops had reached Aleppo. In a month which was crowded with wonderful happenings, the suddenness and the devastating effect of the victory which Sir Edmund Allenby had won in Palestine yet stood out as a landmark of the Great War. His work spelt the elimination of Turkey from the conflict, and perhaps more completely than in the case of any other combatant, the Turkish Empire's integrity was ruined on the stricken field of what, by one of history's fateful coincidences, is known as the field of Armageddon. The Turkish Cabinet, which replaced that of Talaat and Enver in the middle of October had immediately entered into negotiations for an armistice, which was signed at Mudros on 30th October, and came into operation on 1st November, 1918.

The foregoing account of Turkey's intervention in the war would be incomplete without a reference to the bloodthirsty and cruel extermination of the Armenians in Asia Minor, which was engineered by Talaat and Enver, and more than any other action of the Turkish Empire, put the Turks outside any future control of subject races.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE BALKANS AND THE WAR

The Balkan States, which were at the orifice of the volcano whose outburst overwhelmed Europe, became themselves part of the debris of the explosion. Serbia was broken in pieces by the force and treachery of the Central Powers; Greece by the self-sufficiency of a king who mistook military knowledge for political prescience; Roumania by the defection of Russia and the inefficiency of her own military leadership; and Bulgaria, the last to fall, by the action of a ruler whose greatest fault was that he was too astute to have a conscience. Serbia was the first to suffer. The bombardment of Belgrade began on 29th July, 1914, and the Serbian Government withdrew to the ancient capital of Nish. A small Austrian expedition crossed the Save and the Drina, while the Serbians, together with the Montenegrins, endeavoured to "raise" Bosnia. Neither attempt was very productive, and after mutual withdrawals and advances, an Austrian invasion of Serbia by an army corps was directed in three columns. The campaign at first went very well for the Austrians, for the Serbians were none too plentifully supplied either with guns or shells; and though progress in the mountainous country was slow Valjevo fell on 19th November; the Serbians were pushed back at Lazarevatz on the 28th; and Belgrade had to be abandoned by them the next day.

But two things were happening; the

farther the Austrians pushed south-eastwards across the mountainous country the greater became their difficulties of supply, and the Serbians, falling back towards their bases, began to receive new supplies of ammunition. The first symptom of their reaction was manifested by a counter-attack in the mountainous region (2nd December): and the Battle of Rudnik, or the Battle of the Ridges, which began next day, and which, while in appearance the desperate stand of a retreating army, was in fact the deployment of the Serbian fighting forces under favourable natural conditions. In this battle the Serbians were better led, and they proved better fighters. The *moral* of the Austrian forces left something to be desired, and in three days they were outfought and in disorderly flight, leaving behind them 15,000 prisoners and 19 guns. The Serbians followed up their victory without a moment's hesitation. Had they possessed any fleet of aeroplanes the Austrian divisions could hardly have got back at all; but in remnants they contrived to recross the Drina and the Save and evacuated Belgrade on 15th December. Their invasion had cost them 28,000 prisoners and 70 guns.

During 1915 the Serbian Government continued to urge on the Allies the desirability of so reinforcing the Serbian army as to give it the opportunity of undertaking active operations against Austria-Hungary. It was an enterprise which for sound strategic reasons France would not, and Great Britain could not, undertake. The Dardanelles Expedition more than absorbed any resources which Great Britain should have spared; and the failure of it reacted on Serbian prospects in another direction. King Constantine of Greece had played with a proposal to give Greek support to the Dardanelles Expedition, but had urged an attack, not at the point where the British operations took place, but on the Turkish flank. His advice being disregarded he withdrew his support, and was, from a military point of view, justified. Thenceforward, being convinced, as King Ferdinand of Bulgaria was also, that the winning cards were with the Central Powers, he drew farther and farther away from the Allies, and maintained what he described as an attitude of neutrality. It was, in effect, little removed from unfriendliness to the Allies.

In the summer and autumn of 1915 it became more and more evident that Bulgaria was about to throw in her lot with the Central Powers. Serbia was convinced of it, and urged the Allies to allow her to attack Bulgaria. The demand was refused because Sir Edward Grey hoped, and apparently the Russian Foreign Office confirmed the expectation, that Bulgaria would be afraid to depart from her neutrality. Moreover, despite Mr. Lloyd George's plan for a Balkan Expedition, neither Lord Kitchener nor General Joffre would agree to it.[1] A letter from Prince Hatzfeld[2] in the summer of 1915 spoke certainly of Bulgarian intervention after the harvest: and von Falkenhayn's book of memoirs mentions the military agreement, which also must have been made in the summer, by which Bulgaria was to supply 2 army corps (or armies), and Germany 4 divisions, for the invasion of Serbia. It is improbable that King Constantine of Greece was unaware of this: but when, the Bulgarian attitude having been openly defined, he was asked to fulfil the letter of the Greek treaty with Serbia, by which Greece promised to come to Serbia's aid in the event of invasion by Bulgaria, he declined to do so, in the teeth of the advice offered by his Prime Minister, M. Venizelos.

The experiences of the Austrians in invading Serbia had shown the difficulties. Their plan had been to outflank the Serbian army in the west, or Save and Drina front, while holding them on the Danube or northern front. The plan evolved by the German Head-quarters Staff was an elaboration of that, with another factor thrown in (namely, a second outflanking attack by the Bulgarians on the eastern front) which was mathematically certain to effect the purpose. To make assurance doubly sure the German Head-quarters Staff was careful to supply much larger forces than the whole Serbian army, to equip them well, and to see that German leadership and German methods

[1] *Life of Lord Kitchener*, by Sir G. Arthur. (Macmillan.)
[2] Von Papen's papers.

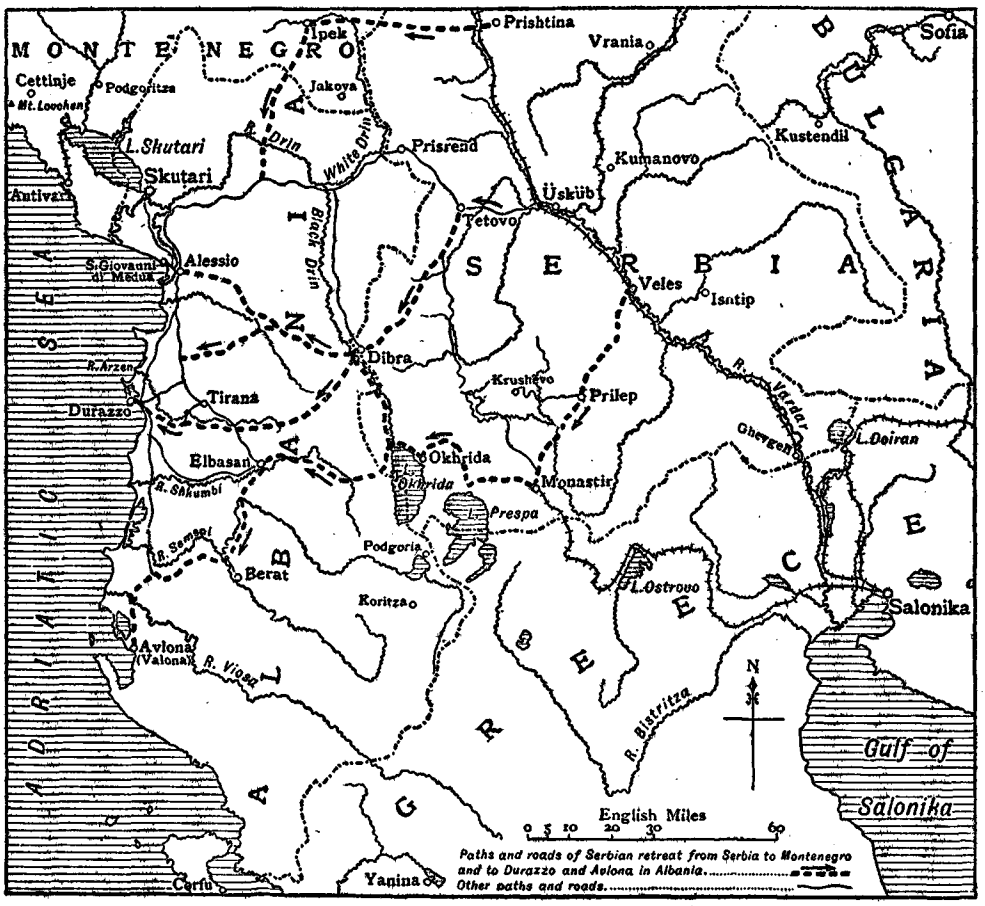
informed the operations. The Austro-German forces employed consisted of 2 armies directed by General von Mackensen. The First Army, under General Köevess, was placed west of Belgrade with 2 detached divisions for a wide flanking movement. These were to travel by the old roads over the Save and the Drina. The Second Army was commanded by General von Gallwitz, and it was the " shock " army on which the brunt of the fighting was to fall. It was to cross the Danube east of Belgrade at Semendria and Ram and hook itself to the Serbian main forces.

On 7th October, 1915, the combined operation began, with results which were never in doubt. The Serbians could not retreat rapidly: but had to retreat fighting, which they did with great tenacity and fierceness. Belgrade fell on 9th October; at the crossings of Semendria and Ram the Serbians could do no more than make the German forces pay a heavy toll, and von Gallwitz was able without great difficulty to take Pozarevatz, and, deploying on a broad front of 40 miles, to shepherd the Serbians southwards in front of him. General Köevess and the 2 divisions farther west were able to join hands, and north and west the Serbians were enclosed in a wide loop.

By the 20th another side had been added to the loop by the intervention of the 2 Bulgarian armies on the eastern front. The first of these, under General Bodajeff, was directed at the north-eastern corner of Serbia, so as to take the Serbians opposing von Gallwitz on the flank; the Second Bulgarian Army, under General Teodoreff, was directed south of Nish, so that if the Serbians protracted their resistance too long their retreat to the south along the Vardar Valley would be cut off, and they would stand in danger of being wholly surrounded. Meanwhile the extreme westward force, marching towards Vishegrad and Ositza, would shut the door on the south-eastern side. These plans worked with no more than the checks natural to warfare; there was little else to impede them. By 5th November Nish was occupied, the Bulgarians (Bodajeff) and Germans were in touch (7th November): von Gallwitz, after three days' fighting, captured Krushevatz (10th November), and the wide flanking Vishegrad force reached Ositza, so that the whole of the western or Little Morava valley was in Austro-German hands. The mischief was deepening every day. The southern Bulgarian army under Teodoreff had seized and held Vranje (29th October), on the railway below Nish, and then Veles. From Veles one column had been sent to Uskub, the strategic and road centre of Macedonia, and another to endeavour to get in touch with the Vishegrad force coming down on the west. Thus the net was closing round the Serbian army: and though it could not be drawn tight, General Teodoreff ordered to send a column 15,000 strong towards Monastir to lessen one of the meshes.

The Franco-British attempt to cut a hole in it on the south side was made altogether too late. A considerable force of British and French troops had made a base of Salonika, despite Greek protests against the occupation as a breach of neutrality; and on 14th October, after considerable vacillation in Paris and London, a force under the leadership of General Sarrail began to move up the Vardar Valley, the British column, under General Mahon, marching on the right towards Lake Doiran, and the French towards Strumnitza. The frontier was crossed on 21st October, and the French came into collision with the Bulgarians on 23rd October near Strumnitza station. Joint Franco-British actions were fought at Gevgheli with the Bulgarians on the 30th (the day on which the Germans took the arsenal of Kraguievatz), but these minor engagements had hardly any influence on the general operations. There were a few days in which it seemed possible that a junction might be made with the harried Serbians. The Serbians, retreating from Uskub, occupied a strong position on the Babuna heights outside, on the road to Monastir, and held it while General Sarrail endeavoured to reach Veles. They fought a desperate battle on 4th, 5th, 6th November, and finally drove back the Bulgarians towards Veles. But though, as late as 8th, 9th, 10th November the French made progress from Grodsko to

Veles, the Bulgarian reinforcements were able both to prevent the French from advancing north of the Cerna river (which bends from Monastir to the Vardar), and to send a force to outflank the Serbians by way of Prilep. The Babuna positions were perforce evacuated on 14th November, and the vember. General Teodoreff's Bulgarian columns, meanwhile, were strung from Tetovo to Katchanik to prevent any Serbian break to the south; and from Prilep to Grodsko and Strumnitza (including the strong Archangel positions), to bar the French from coming north.




Map showing the Lines of the Serbian Retreat to the Adriatic

Serbians were pushed west farther and farther away from Sarrail's force, evacuating Prilep and Monastir (16th November) in turn. Von Mackensen had now nothing more to do than to bring down his column from the north as fast and as far as possible in order to shut the Serbian way of escape to the west. Mitrovitza fell on 24th November, with heavy losses to the Serbians; and Prishtina was occupied on 28th November.

The rest of the story, so far as the Serbians are concerned in it, is that of a terrible retreat through the mountainous and far from hospitable country of Albania to the sea. The Austrian columns had not been able to shut the door on them altogether, and the Bulgarians, following them up, could not press on much faster than either the Austrians or the Serbians. By 7th December the Serbian army, crossing the frontiers of

Albania or Montenegro, disappeared from Serbia. It lost many men, killed, wounded, prisoners, starved in the retreat. Altogether 50,000 men, as well as its guns and equipment disappeared; but the relics of its army which reached Durazzo and Scutari numbered some 100,000 unconquered and unconquerable soldiers. King Peter shared the retreat and reached Brindisi. Units of the Italian fleet, in some of the best organized naval operations of the war, succeeded in transferring the Serbian soldiers to Corfu, where they were re-equipped, rested, and made ready to take part again—as they did with the highest credit—in the war for the recovery of their country.

Meanwhile Sarrail, the *raison d'être* of his expedition gone, sustained and defeated a strong Bulgarian attack on 27th November, but immediately began preparations for retirement. The retirement was not left unmolested, and a determined attempt was made to isolate the French force by an attack on the British front at Lake Doiran. The British resisted stubbornly, but, though sustaining 1300 casualties, fell back to the Vardar slowly enough to keep touch with the French. Acting as flank guard to them they enabled the retreat to be made jointly, and no more than 5 machine-guns were lost in it. On 11th December the Franco-British force administered a severe check to the Bulgarians following them up, and by the 13th were back in good order over the Greek frontier.

Their position there was more satisfactory in a military than a political sense. The Bulgarians advanced to the frontier; the Franco-British forces entrenched themselves about Salonika, which was at that time a cosmopolitan nest of spies, and in which Greece had no wish whatever to act as host to any belligerent. The decided victory of the Central Powers, the elimination of the Serbian army; the withdrawal from Gallipoli, had reduced the value of the Allied stock greatly in the eyes of Greece and of Montenegro. Montenegro, which had offered some opposition to Austria-Hungary while Serbia was yet undefeated, shortly followed her out of the war, though in a very different fashion. Prince Mirko of Montenegro went to Vienna; and Mont Lovcen, which overlooks the Bay of Cattaro, was with scarce a pretence of resistance abandoned to the Austrians, who entered Cettinje, the capital of Montenegro, without difficulty. King Nicholas of Montenegro left his country and went to Paris. King Constantine of Greece could not follow the example of either the King or the Crown Prince of Montenegro, and had to content himself with making difficulties for the Allies, with whom it could scarcely be pretended that he was in sympathy. M. Venizelos was powerless against the Greek military party, which was openly pro-German. A climax came in the summer of 1916 when, following riots directed against the Allied embassies in Athens, the Bulgarians advanced on 15th August to Florina, south of Monastir, in the west, and to the Greek port of Kavalla on the east. The town was hypothetically defended by the 4th Greek Army Corps, 2 divisions of which, nevertheless, surrendered without a fight, and with all their equipment. The 3rd Division, whose action was typical of the division of Greek opinion, joined the Allies at Salonika.

The attitude of Greece was still far from satisfactory, and the danger to the Allies by a stab in the back was in the autumn still far from being illusory; but since a number of Greek volunteers now joined the Venizelos party and appeared to fight with the Allies, General Sarrail was permitted in September to undertake an offensive against the Bulgarians. His force at this time included French, British, Russians, Italians, Serbians, and Portuguese. A British column under General Milne pushed the Bulgarians back from the Struma River line, and in October drove them beyond the railway between Seres and Demir-Hissar.

This, however, was of the nature of a holding action; the more active thrust was delivered by Sarrail's French and Serbian divisions, with a Russian contingent. These steadily fought and manœuvred the Bulgarians back from Lake Ostrovo and Florina, and then engaged them on the Kenali lines which guard the plain of Monastir, and stretch from the height above Lake Presba to the Moglena Mountains. The lines were

*Drawn by F. de Haener*

THE SERBIAN RETREAT

Soldiers and civilians on the march to the Montenegrin Frontier

protected from an attack on the east by the Brod group of mountains round which the Cerna river flows in a loop. The chief credit of turning these lines rested with the Serbians. By 14th November the Bulgarians recognized that they were untenable, and fell back to the Bistritza, which could not be defended. By 18th and 19th November the Bulgar-German forces were out of Monastir also, and the Serbians marched first into it, as they had every right to do, though this implies no derogation of the resolute fighting of the French and Russian units which had acted with them.

At Monastir General Sarrail remained—by no means to the content of the Serbians, who were quite willing and eager to push on, and who, under their own generals, were probably at this period quite capable of doing so. The Allies, however, were unwilling to add to their responsibilities here. The British and French were at this time confirmed "Westerners"; the Italians declined further assistance, political as well as military reasons influencing their decision. Some of these political reasons were reflected in the long hesitation in dealing firmly with King Constantine of Greece. The Allied fleets blockaded Greece in December, 1916; after an affray between Monarchist troops and the Allies on 1st December, the Monarchist army was withdrawn to the Peloponnesus, while Venezelist volunteers trooped to the Allies; and finally, on 12th January, 1917, M. Jonnart, a very determined French official, having been given plenary powers, King Constantine was induced by the Allies to abdicate in favour of his son, Prince Alexander. His Prime Minister, M. Zaimis, shortly afterwards followed him, having furnished M. Jonnart with the opportunity for a *mot* which ran: "M. Zaimis, you talk very well, but you talk too much, and your words and your acts do not agree".

King Constantine's perplexities might not unreasonably have been aggravated by the spectacle of the intervention of another Balkan nation, Roumania, in the war. Roumania, at the beginning of the war, may be said to have been fairly divided in prepossession in respect of the side to which to ally herself. She feared Russia on the one hand and Bulgaria on the other; she had, while King Carol was alive, her pro-German influence at Court and elsewhere, her patriots, among whom was Ferdinand of Roumania, who believed that the country could not be emancipated while overshadowed by Hungary; and her hard-headed politicians, who were not alone in wanting to make the best bargain possible for a little country whose wealth lay in her agriculture and her oilfields. In the end Roumania, which had long resisted the appeals of M. Take Jonescu, her pro-ally statesman, to take the plunge, declared war on Austria-Hungary on 27th August, 1916. The moment was when Brussiloff had flung back the Austro-Hungarian armies in Galicia, and had opened a way to a junction with Roumania through the Bukovina. But negotiations and *pour parlers* had been long in progress: and it was assumed (in England and France at any rate), that besides the 600,000 men whom Roumania was said to be able to put into the field, she had guns and sufficient ammunition for them. It was stated at the time that her 10 army corps of 20 divisions had been more than a year in training, and that ample supplies had reached her by way of Archangel. The only commentary necessary on the validity of these statements is that the German Foreign Office was taken by surprise by the Roumanian declaration of war. The surprise did not however greatly delay them in putting into execution a plan of campaign against Roumania which was as altogether too much for the strategists of the Roumanian army, as the fighting organization and leadership of the German divisions were too capable for the untried Roumanian subordinate officers. The rank and file of the Roumanian armies fought well and very bravely, but they were badly led, and there was no comparison between the artilleries of the combatants.

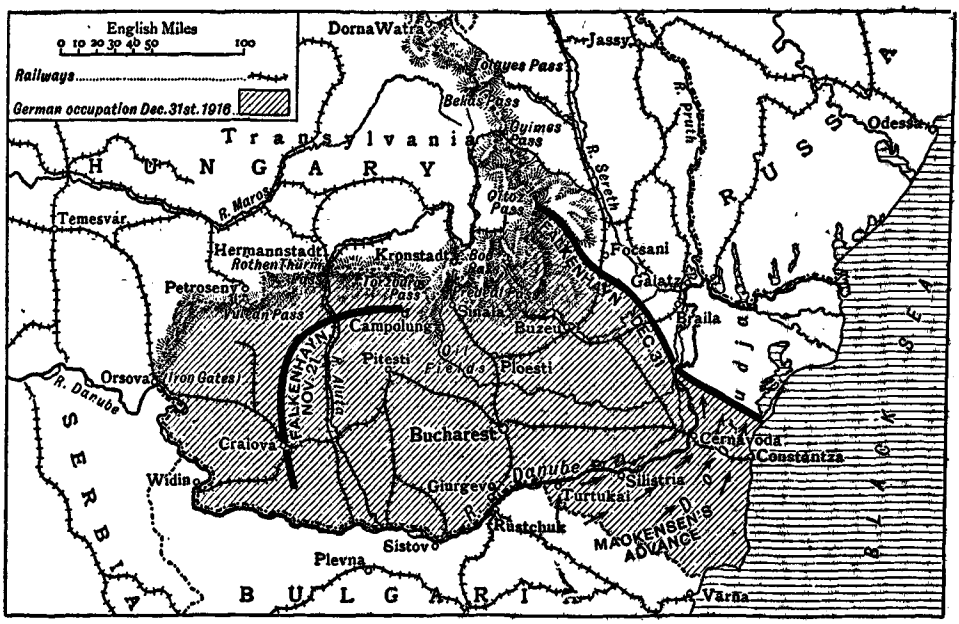
What seems now to have been the only possible strategic movement for Roumania was an invasion of Bulgaria by way of the Dobrudja, and a defensive policy for the front of the Carpathian passes. It was a policy that was not followed, and substituted for it was an advance across the Carpathians into Transylvania, where it was hoped that

the presence of Roumanian divisions would rouse the country to revolt against Hungary. This advance had a deceptive success; the whole of the passes were secured in the first days of September, and on the other side of the frontier Brasso and Petroseny were occupied. By 16th September the Hungarian strategical frontier railway was in Roumanian hands; and on the Danube Orsova had been taken. It was also announced that Russian troops, with which was a Serbian unit, had reached the Dobrudja.

But they were by no means in sufficient force there to strike: and by the first week of September a most unpleasant awakening awaited them. A composite army of Bulgarians and Turks, with some good German contingents and a German framework, as well as a German general of incomparable driving power, General von Mackensen, crossed the Bulgarian frontier on the Danube side, and advancing eastwards with great rapidity brushed aside the Roumanian bridge-head contingents. At Turtukai the bridge-head was held by the Roumanian 15th Division. Von Mackensen's artillery smashed the defences and overwhelmed the garrison. The 17th Roumanian Division, coming up from Silistria in aid, was similarly overwhelmed and destroyed (6th September). In less than a week von Mackensen had taken 25,000 men, including 462 officers, and 100 guns—a most ominous beginning for the Roumanians. Von Mackensen gave them no time to recover. He drove back the Russian force advancing through the Dobrudja, forcing them back on to a line designed to cover the Cernavoda bridge and Constanza. On 16th September he attempted to rush their lines; but in entrenchments the Russians and Roumanians and the devoted Serbs fought well, and a five days' battle left the lines unbreached. General Avaresco, the Roumanian Commander-in-Chief, had hurried to the spot to superintend the resistance. It was more than time, but his presence was soon more urgently demanded on the front he had left.

The Germans had well understood the psychology of the Bulgarians in sending them under von Mackensen to attack the Roumanians, and the intervention of their army had been just in the nick of time. But they quite well understood that their own main effort must be made against the Roumanian First Army on the Roumanians' western front: and sent a strong force with a capable general to assail it. The General was von Falkenhayn, and had German Head-quarters been influenced by any but practical considerations there would have been irony in the choice, for von Falkenhayn, the "Westerner", had just been superseded in France by the Hindenburg-Ludendorff combination, which had insisted against Falkenhayn's judgment on the need for active campaigns in the Eastern Theatre. Von Falkenhayn's opinions did not in any way diminish the energy with which he pressed his attack. On 19th September the Roumanians found themselves obliged to evacuate Petroseny; on the 26th they were assailed at Hermannstadt and the mouth of the Rother Thurm Pass, and had to be withdrawn with a loss of 3000 men and 20 guns. This was the first symptom of a disorder which spread till it infected the whole of the Roumanian armies. The Second Roumanian army was compelled to retreat, in conformity with the First, through the central and northerly groups of passes, and by 12th October von Falkenhayn had a small force in Roumania, 10 miles from Campolung and the Bucharest railway. By the 18th he had a hold on three passes, Gyimes (north), Torzburg (centre), Rother Thurm (south), and became free to choose his route of invasion. Ultimately he chose the southern passes; but before the effort was made there his colleague, von Mackensen, had in effect decided the issue of the campaign by breaking through the Russo-Roumanian lines in the Dobrudja (19th October), and capturing Constanza on the Black Sea (22nd), and the Cernavoda bridge-head (28th). Thenceforward the defeat of Roumania as described in Chapter XIII, was only a matter of time. Bucharest was abandoned without defence. Ploesti, the oil-field centre, followed (the oil wells were destroyed by a British party under Captain Norton Griffiths; the Germans put them together again in about eight months): and

the Roumanian Government retired to Jassy. General Sakharoff's Russians were driven into Bessarabia: but the Russians and Roumanians, falling back on the Sereth lines, were able to hold the defences, and thereafter, till the defection of Russia cut the ground from under Roumania's feet, her soldiers fought excellently. They held their ground against such forces as the Germans thought fit to deploy against them throughout the first half of 1917. It was only after




Map illustrating the Roumanian Campaign to the end of 1916

Lenin and Trotsky, the representatives of the Soviet power in Russia, had sold their country at Brest-Litovsk, between December 1917 and February 1918, that Roumania, thus deserted, was compelled to sign the Treaty of Bucharest by which—until the tables were turned by the Treaty of Peace at Versailles in 1918—the Dobrudja was ceded to Bulgaria, the army demobilized, arms and munitions surrendered, and the products of the country, grain and oil, placed under German control.

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During 1917 the Allied armies remained comparatively inactive; a Franco-Serbian attack north of Monastir, operations by General Milne on the British front in the Struma Valley, comprised the greater part of them. In 1918 General Franchet d'Espérey succeeded General Sarrail in supreme command. During the earlier part of the year naturally no major operations were undertaken, though it was known after midsummer that the Bulgarian forces were very gravely dissatisfied, and were something more than war-weary. On 15th September the moment came to General Franchet d'Espérey, as it had come to Marshal Foch, to strike the culminating blow at a shaking enemy. An offensive on a very wide front had been designed. The attack was divided into two halves: that of the French and Serbian on the left or Monastir front, and the British and Greek on the Doiran front. The British and Greek had a very trying experience, and for two days hammered in vain at the extremely difficult and strongly fortified Bulgarian positions. They suffered very grave losses in attacking almost impregnable positions, but the effect of their attack was to pen the Bulgarians here and prevent them from sending reinforcements to the western half of their front, where they were very much needed. The Serbian and French advance pierced the

Bulgarian front between Dopropolje and Vetrenik, and by the 18th the assaulting division had reached the Cerna, 10 miles behind the Bulgarian armies' lines. The effect of this thrust, which was pushed farther and faster (and with extraordinary fury by the home-returning Serbians), was to drive a wedge between the First and Second Bulgarian Armies (one of which had tarried too long in front of the British and Greek attack), and eventually to drive the First Bulgarian Army headlong towards northern Serbia, while the Second Bulgarian Army retreated as fast as it could to Sofia. The First was pursued by the Serbians; the Second by the British and Greeks. On 23rd September French cavalry reached Prilep; on 29th September Uskub. The Serbians were meanwhile vengefully pursuing what remnants remained as far as Nish, and practically hardly stopped till they reached Belgrade. But by the 26th the politicians of Sofia had had more than enough of a hopeless cause, and had sent delegates to treat with General Franchet d'Espérey. On the 28th an armistice was signed at Salonika, agreeing to the demobilization of the Bulgarian army, the surrender of arms, munitions, transport, and railways —the last of which were used by General Milne's force to move onwards towards Turkey.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE WAR IN GERMANY'S COLONIES

Whereas the campaigns in Macedonia, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt, and all those regions comprised in the Near or Middle East had a direct bearing on the principal operations of the European War, because they withdrew from the combatants on the chief fronts either men or supplies or both, the operations in Africa and the Far East were negative in influence. They diverted hardly any German resources not already existent there; though they occupied from time to time much of the energies of Great Britain. By way of compensation, they brought in to fight for the Allies, in East and South-West Africa for example, the military aid of the forces led successively by General Botha, General Smuts, and General Deventer. Such aid was of great moral value to the Allied cause, and was of the highest advantage to Great Britain historically and permanently. The same summation might be applied to these campaigns as a whole. By the revelation of the wide-spread feeling against German colonial government, they were damaging to the German cause; and they raised the question, of the very greatest importance to the future of Europe and the world, of the proper government of these regions in the interests of the native races inhabiting them.

If the future commercial struggle of the world is to be in the Pacific the fall of the German colonial possessions there may come to be rated as the most significant of all. The largest of them was the eastern part of New Guinea, or Papua, and its 70,000 square miles were comprised under the name of Kaiser Wilhelm Land. Contiguous to it were the Bismarck Archipelago and the islands of the Solomon Group. North of the Equator were the Ladrone Islands, the Caroline Islands, German Samoa, and Kiao-Chau in China. The islands, apart from any influence or value they might possess in the twentieth century, formed a well-organized sphere of influence from a territorial or naval point of view: but in the presence of the dominance of the British navy they were incapable of offering any prolonged resistance. Samoa was the first to surrender, on 30th August, to a combined squadron of British and British-Australian cruisers, with which was the French cruiser *Montcalm*. (The ships were the battle-cruisers *Australia*, the cruisers *Melbourne*,

*Psyche*, *Pyramus*, and *Philomel*.) New Pomerania in the Bismarck Archipelago was the next to go (12th September), but here a landing party had to fight the German garrison before the wireless station at Herbertshohe was taken. On the 13th the Solomon Islands capitulated, and they were followed by German New Guinea, where the anticipated struggle did not take place. Nauru, a detached island far to the east, was the last to be surrendered, on 6th November.

The more northerly islands and Kiao-Chau fell to Japan. The Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall groups were surrendered at the summons of a Japanese squadron in the first week of October: and were at once delivered by Japan to Australia. Kiao-Chau Japan took and reserved for herself. The colony was Germany's principal commitment and pawn in the Far East. It has a fine harbour, in which, at the outbreak of hostilities were Admiral von Spee's squadron, and a garrison of 6000 men to man the adequate defences. Admiral von Spee withdrew before the ultimatum expired. The Japanese invested the defences with a force of some 23,000 men under General Kamio, and brought up a strong siege-train of heavy guns. With the Japanese force was a small British contingent of South Wales Borderers and Sikhs under General Barnardiston. The operations began on 27th August, despite a protest by China (which was indicative of her future attitude at the Peace Conference), against the infringement of her neutrality. After a period of gradual investment enforced by the rains more active operations began on 25th September, and in a week the fortress was completely shut in. It was not till the last day of October, however, that the serious reduction of the German defences was begun. The bombardment was very effective, and on 6th November the Japanese, drawing closer, were in a position to launch a final assault in force. They captured a number of small outlying redoubts on the night of the 5th, and by daylight the troops were ready to go forward. They were not called on to do so, for as soon as it was light white flags were discernible floating from the buildings in the town. The fortress therefore capitulated without enduring the dangers of a siege which could have only one ending. The surrender was logical if not heroic.

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The smaller campaigns of Africa were those in Togo-land and the Cameroons; and they differed a good deal in character. That in Togo-land occupied no more than a month: the Cameroon fighting was carried on in a desultory way for a year and a half, and thereafter the Germans succeeded in withdrawing most of their fighting material to the neighbouring territory of Rio Muni, which is Spanish and neutral. The chief value of Togo-land to the Germans in war time was its wireless station at Kamina, and in order to keep it, Major von Doring, the German Governor, made the extraordinary proposal that Togo-land should remain neutral. No notice was taken of the suggestion. French and British forces entered the colony from east and west on 6th August, the British commander, Captain Barker, demanding its surrender. Lome, the port and capital, was evacuated on the 7th, and the local commissioner on the expiration of the armistice announced that *part* of the Colony was surrendered. But Berlin was strongly urging von Doring to hold the wireless station at Kamina, and it became necessary to send an expedition to bring him to reason. A Franco-British force under Colonel Bryant began to march up country from Lome on 12th August. It consisted of 2 companies of the Gold Coast Regiment, later joined by French colonial infantry; and on the 22nd the force came into collision with von Doring's troops at Chra on the railway to Kamina. The German native troops put up a good resistance, but their commander, learning that other French Colonial troops were advancing from Dahomey at his back, left his defences and returned to Kamina to blow up the wireless station. It disappeared on the 24th, and on the 28th the German military commander, after trying to make terms, surrendered unconditionally.

The resistance of the Cameroons was on a vastly different scale. Germany had some 3000 native troops, with German officers

and non-commissioned officers; but when war was declared Colonel Zimmerman, a resolute soldier, summoned to the colours all the Germans in this very large colony (which stretched from the Congo to Lake Chad). He enrolled natives to the number of some 20,000 men, and had 3000 Germans to stiffen them. Against these the Allied native forces, chiefly Senegalese and West Africans, numbered in all some 19,000. There were a few Belgians; the majority were under French command. The British expedition which set out from Nigeria began most unfortunately. Of the three columns the first, under Lieutenant-Colonel Mair, was almost wiped out on 6th September. Another, under Lieutenant-Colonel Maclear, was thrown back on its base at Yola; a third (Captain Fox), marching on Mora, was held up there, but on the whole stood its ground till the situation bettered.

This occurred when the more formidable expedition under General Sir C. Dobell was concentrated. It was a force of some 4500 men, mainly West African Frontier Force, partly Senegalese tirailleurs under French officers at the Cameroon River estuary. The troops arrived late in September, and under the protection of the cruiser *Challenger*, and the gunboat *Dwarf* (which had survived a large number of perils from improvised torpedoes and mines), occupied Duala (27th September). General Dobell advanced into the back country eastwards to Edea, receiving the most energetic support from the naval forces, which forced their way in pinnaces and every form of light craft up the rivers, as the Germans under Colonel Zimmerman fell back eastwards on their base. A naval flotilla made its way thither as support to two marching columns, while other columns radiated like the spokes of a wheel from Duala. The experiences of the various columns which took Buea, Nkongsamba, the railway terminus, and Dschang are extraordinarily interesting in spite of the comparative smallness of the operations, and the defence of Edea, after it had been occupied by Colonel Mayer, is a story in itself.

The Germans attempted few counter-offensives, and those on which they embarked were usually wrecked by the attitude of the natives, who acted as intelligence agents to the British, regarded by them as deliverers from the Germans. The attack by Colonel Zimmerman on Edea was a costly defeat, and by mid-January, 1915, General Dobell's forces were strongly consolidated from railhead at Nkongsamba to this town. Meanwhile the French columns directed by General Aymerich, meeting difficulties and surprises not less than those which confronted General Dobell, had occupied Carnot Nola, Molundu and Marna. But the operations were really too disconnected to effect a valid clearance on the borders between Nigeria and the Cameroons; and in February 1915, General Cunliffe assumed command of a column which marched on Garua. It was a strong post, vigorously and ably defended by Captain von Crailsheim, and it was not till 10th June that it surrendered after its defenders had made an attempt to withdraw over the flooded river.

This success was followed by a serious set-back to a column which had been part of the co-operative advance (to be made with the French) on Yaunde. One column (Colonel Haywood), was held up; another (Colonel Mayer), failing to find support from the French column which had been reckoned on (and which was able to make headway too late), had to fall back on its base, sadly reduced by fighting and dysentery. (5th June, *et seq.*) The combined movements on Yaunde had therefore to be put off till late September, after the rains. Three columns then set out under General Aymerich, General Dobell, and General Cunliffe. Banyo was taken after a desperate three days' fight (4th to 6th November), by Cunliffe's force, which thereafter marched towards Yaunde. It was 40 miles away on 8th January, by which time General Dobell's column, reinforced by Indian troops till it was 8000 strong, was converging on the same point, its march chequered with a great deal of hard fighting. The Germans, however, realized that to stay was to be lost, for other columns under General Aymerich and Colonel Mayer were also approaching; and evacuated the town on 1st January, 1916. Colonel Gorges, at the head of Dobell's

column, entered Yaunde without opposition. Colonel Zimmerman, with the Governor, Herr Ebermair, retreated into Spanish territory, which they reached despite the efforts of the French to cut them off. By the beginning of February they were over the frontier, and the last point in the German Cameroons to surrender was the town of Mora, which had been very gallantly held by Captain von Raben.

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The conquest of German South-West Africa, a colony in which the Germans had spilt a great deal of blood, and spent great sums of money without adequate return, marked a step in the disintegration of the German colonial empire, but still more the destruction of any hopes they entertained of destroying the integrity of the dominions of British South Africa. From the Allied point of view the campaign was most valuable because it placed on their side the forces which General Botha brought into the field, and which were both British and South African Dutch in origin, so that any danger of a blow in the back from disaffected Transvaalers or Cape Dutch was entirely removed. What that danger might hypothetically have been is to be seen from the abortive rebellion led by Maritz and inspired by German influence early in the war. The positive value of the South-West African campaign to Great Britain was that it bound to her such men as General Botha, a soldier and a statesman whose title to greatness was never more clearly displayed than in his prescience that the freedom of his country and countrymen could be secured only by friendship with Britain and the British; and General Smuts. As a military undertaking probably no leader could have brought it to such swift and conspicuous success as General Botha, who had the soldierly experience, the knowledge of the country and conditions, and the quality of leadership which could best cope with the difficult problems of so wide and untractable a field of warfare. The greater part of the colony is desert and bush, the desert swept by sand-storms, and passable only by those who know its water-holes; the bush dense and thorny. Windhoek, the capital of the colony, stands on a fertile plateau inland; across the plateau runs the railway which the Germans built in two branches to the coastal harbours, Luderitz Bay and Swakopmund. Windhoek lies nearer the northern branch, and along this railway was Botha's main line of defence. A second column was to move up the other branch railway from Luderitz Bay; two others from the south-eastern part of the colony, which they were to clear, were ultimately to join with it.

A force of 2000 men (Colonel Beves), infantry, artillery, and Light Horse reached Luderitz Bay on 18th September, 1914, the port surrendering next day. Other troops wholly volunteers, under Sir D. Mackenzie, destined originally for Swakopmund, established a base at Chaukaib, and, under Colonel Skinner, at Walfish Bay. Yet other British forces had landed at Port Nolloth (General Lukin), and had sent forward prematurely a patrol to Sandfontein. This was attacked and a relief force (Colonel Grant) compelled to surrender—a very bad beginning which the British owed partly to the treachery of Maritz.

Maritz's rebellion was eventually broken by Colonel van Deventer (January, 1915), and this officer speedily proved his ability by clearing the south-east portion of the colony. He advanced in three columns, with Colonel Bouwer and Colonel Berrangé on his wings. Colonel Berrangé's column, which had the most trying march over some 400 miles of desert with, at one point, more than a hundred miles between water-holes, was some 2000 strong,[1] and was further reinforced later by Colonel van Deventer's brother. The junction of these two, like the march itself, was one of the feats of the campaign, and reflected the highest credit on the column leaders who carried it out in the face of every kind of resistance, and on the tactician, van Deventer, who planned it. By 7th April the columns had taken Kalkfontein (van Deventer's central column timing its attack on it to take place when Berrangé's remarkable turning movement on its flank had been completed), and Warmbad (Colonel Bouwer). On the 11th

[1] South African Mounted, and Bechuanaland Rifles, Cullinan's and Kalaharia Horse.

General Smuts arrived to take charge of the whole force, which had, pending his arrival, cleared nearly the whole south-eastern part of the colony, a district about the size of the North of England.

Mackenzie's force at length moved out to Garub (19th February), after a trying period of waiting; and Skinner's, not without adventure, to Swakopmund. On 11th February General Botha took command there; and following him came large numbers of the incomparable mounted Burghers of the Transvaal and the Orange. The force did not move out without due precautions till the middle of March; then, employing the familiar Boer tactics, they drove the Germans from Riet and Pforte. The ground was thus clear for the joint advance, and Botha's Union troops, acting in concert with those of Mackenzie, fought a successful engagement at Gibeon. General Smuts (27th April), proclaimed the clearance of his area, and his columns, with those of Botha, began their converging march. Botha moved up the Swakop River in columns spread over a very wide front, the brigades being led by General Brits, Myburgh, and Manie Botha; and on 5th May he entered Karibib without opposition. A light railway with supplies was being swiftly built behind his forces. On 10th May his mounted burghers were outside Windhoek, and on the 12th he rode in to receive its surrender. The Germans had withdrawn the bulk of their forces to the north, leaving a small one to the east of Windhoek, and by this time quite realized that they were unable to cope with the superior mobility and forcefulness of the Union troops, or the discerning generalship of the men who led them.

Colonel Franke, the German military commandant, and Herr Seitz, the Governor, proposed an armistice (20th May), and offered terms. General Botha, who knew that he held the enemy in the hollow of his hand, refused to agree to anything but unconditional surrender, and refitted his men for the round-up. They needed refitment; for the trek across country from Swakopmund to Windhoek had been one of the most trying marches of any campaign. On 18th June Botha was ready: and he moved out of Karibib in the age-old crescent formation which in generations of warfare the Boers had borrowed from the South African fighting races, the Zulus and Matabele. Brits took one column wide to the left, Myburgh rode on the right; Botha with 3 brigades (one of infantry under Brigadier-General Beves) marched in the centre. In less than a week the force covered 100 miles and arrived at Otyiwarango. He paused there for a brief rest: and on 1st July, sweeping aside the slight resistance, the infantry entered Otavi, another extraordinary marching feat. The Germans again proposed an armistice: but a Boer is a match for any German in diplomacy, and the flanking columns never ceased their marches, one of which (Brits') was designed to cut off the enemy's retreat into Angola-land. Small columns of Germans made various attempts to evade the surrender which was their certain destiny: but on 8th July General Botha received the total surrender of Colonel Franke's forces. These had been entrenched from Otavi to Tsumeb, but while the Germans parleyed, General Myburgh's column had entered the latter place, and General Brits' right wing was moving round to the east.

The Germans had been outmarched, and out-generalled, and out-thought. Botha had taken great risks, but he understood his enemy, and he could depend wholly on the courage and resource of his own men—matchless guerillas, capable of fighting, marching, and enduring. The Germans had employed some 5000 men, soldiers and civilians, and found them useless. Botha commanded some 30,000 in all, including those on the railways and communications. The total casualties of the campaign were only 1200, and not more than 140 died.

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The campaign in German East Africa was, of all that were fought, the most protracted: and the leading spirit of its resistance on the German side, General von Lettow-Vorbeck, had a career which the two soldiers matched against him, General Smuts and General van Deventer, must in their minds have compared with that of one of their own race,

GENERAL SIR WILLIAM BIRDWOOD, K.C.B.

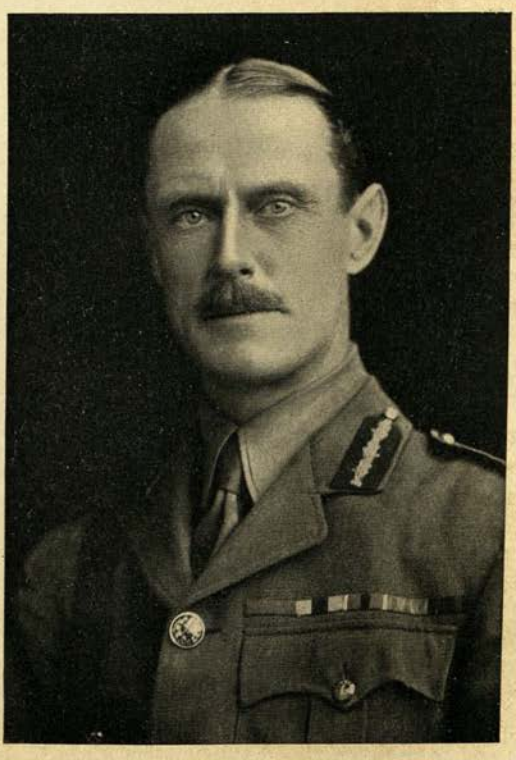
*From a photograph by Bassano*

FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT ALLENBY, G.C.B.

*From a photograph by H. Walter Barnett*

LIEUT.-GEN. SIR STANLEY MAUDE, K.C.B.

*From a photograph by Maull & Fox*



LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR A. J. GODLEY, K.C.B.

*From a photograph by Elliott & Fry*

General De Wet. In the end he fled across the Portuguese border, despoiled the Portuguese of arms and ammunition, and till the Armistice continued to elude the Allies[1], though the colony which he had ranged with such resource was cleared of his colleagues and the Askari fighters on 1st December, 1917.

At the outbreak of war von Lettow-Vorbeck, then a colonel, had a force of 250 Germans, though there were 3000 Germans in the colony whom he could recruit, and a number of others at Dar-es-Salaam on the railway, as well as some 600 who escaped from the *Königsberg*, destroyed in the Rufigi River. To these he added natives, and Arab volunteers: and at its maximum the force may have reached 25,000 men, 2000 of them Europeans. He had 60 guns and machine-guns, and a good supply of ammunition, which he was able to replenish in a number of mysterious and unexpected ways. The reduction of German East Africa was therefore a serious business, and more than any other campaign in Africa drew upon the British resources. The first step taken by Great Britain gave no indication of the task. The light cruisers, *Astræa* and *Pegasus*, bombarded Dar-es-Salaam, and destroyed the wireless station. The Germans were quick to retaliate both on land and sea. Von Lettow-Vorbeck organized raids on the Uganda railway and captured Taveta on the border of British East Africa. At sea the swift German cruiser *Königsberg* crippled the *Pegasus*, lying at Mombasa, as a preliminary to attacking the port from the sea, while von Lettow-Vorbeck assaulted it on the land side. But the *Königsberg* was forced to run by the appearance of superior British naval forces, and was beached (and afterwards destroyed) in the Rufigi River, and all the approaches on Mombasa were checked till the arrival of British reinforcements, mainly from India. The British at this time, confident in their strength (and their navy), believed that the conquest of East Africa would resemble that of the German Pacific colonies; and there was, indeed, a civilian German element quite willing to come to terms. But the military party was of quite different mind; and, having defeated very thoroughly an attempt

Map illustrating the Blockade of the German East African Coast—the shaded area—and the Military Operations early in 1915

[1] In 1918 von Lettow-Vorbeck penetrated Portuguese Nyasaland and Rhodesia: and surrendered only on 14th November, 1918, under the terms of the Armistice with Germany.

made by Major-General Aitken to take Tanga from the sea, at once took charge of the colony's defence.

During the remainder of 1914, and the early months of 1915, the Germans were content to strengthen their positions and to continue their raids. The most serious of these was on Yasin, held by Indian troops—and held to the last—under Colonel Ragbir Singh. Only 20 survivors cut their way out: and with Yasin went Vanga and the Omba Valley. A blockade of the coast was instituted in February, but two blockade-runners got through it in the ensuing twelve months, and brought ammunition to von Lettow-Vorbeck, of which he made the best use. On and about the Victoria Nyanza and Lake Tanganyika, and on the borders of Nyasaland and Rhodesia, many engagements were fought during the years in a species of give-and-take warfare in which neither side could claim any great advantage. In April General Tighe arrived to assume command, and by the end of the year the British Government, yielding to his representations, determined to treat the campaign as a serious one. His force was largely recruited, and General Smith-Dorrien, who had left France, was asked to command it. He was taken ill on the way to assume the command; and after a further delay General Smuts was with some difficulty induced to accept it in his stead. General Smuts arrived at Mombasa on 19th February, 1916, and began to organize measures to deal with the well-armed German force which, under von Lettow-Vorbeck, now had 2000 white men and 14,000 natives. General Smuts approved General Tighe's plan, which was to occupy the Kilimanjaro region by converging advances; and he himself brought to the campaign the methods with which he was familiar, namely those of avoiding frontal attacks on prepared positions and compelling their evacuation by well-contrived turning movements. The conditions of transport in German East Africa, the bush, the swamps, made these tactics less swiftly effective than in South-West Africa. To help him he had a considerable force very largely recruited from South Africa.

The organized campaign began in March, 1916, when General Smut's columns under General Stewart (who advanced on 4th March over the desert towards the rear of Kilimanjaro), General van Deventer (who was to outflank Taveta), and General Tighe (who was to hold the enemy's front), were set in motion.[1] On 8th March van Deventer compelled the evacuation of Taveta; on the 13th, after a stiff fight at Latema-Reata Nek, he captured Moshi, the terminus of the railway from Tanga. On the 21st, continuing his advance, he seized and held Kake, and with General Stewart converging on the same point, the Kilimanjaro region fell like a ripe pear into General Smuts' hands. The first British success of the campaign had been won.

The railway was coming up after the forces, which were now re-organized into new divisions, among whose commanders appear the names of those who had done so well under General Botha. The 3 divisions were 1st (Major-General Hoskins); 2nd (Major-General van Deventer, with Brigadier-Generals Manie Botha and Berrangé); 3rd (Major-General Brits, with Brigadier-Generals Enslin and Beves). It was the 2nd Division under van Deventer that General Smuts determined to send into the heart of the colony, where its arrival would be unexpected. The device was completely successful. The columns converging, or outflanking, according to the necessities of the situation, cleared the main Usambara country in the first half of June; other small columns dealt with the Eastern Usambara (where naval detachments took a hand). Tanga was occupied on 7th July and the railway and district up to Korogwe cleared. The navy took Pangani and, continuing to clear the coast, captured Bagamoyo on 15th August.

Meanwhile, in the middle of May, General Smuts put into operation the main part of his plan, which was to move eastwards towards Handeni, and then, turning south, to march towards the railway in a line parallel to that taken by van Deventer. This was the advance which the Germans anticipated and had made preparations to resist. But

[1] In addition small Belgian, Rhodesian, and Portuguese forces began operations on the Colony's borders.

again General Smuts took them by surprise by sending a strong column (Sheppard and Beves) in advance along the Pangani River. By 15th August the coast had thus been cleared to Bagamoyo, and 100 miles of railway cleared; a force under General Northey from Nyasaland had reached Malangali; Belgian and British forces were to the south of Lake Victoria. Between van Deventer and the British force below Handeni lay the Nguru Mountains, dominating the railway and the great road. Before advance could be made along either, the mountains must be subdued. They were cleared by General Smuts' 1st and 3rd Divisions, while van Deventer marched fighting through the bush towards Mpapawa (12th August), and Kilossa (22nd August), a wearying, half-rationed march. On 24th August General Smuts tried to force von Lettow-Vorbeck to give battle at Marogoro, but again he escaped. Thus fighting delaying and harassing rear-guard actions, but ever retreating, the Germans were gradually and painfully squeezed out, till on 3rd September a combined attack by land and sea took Dar-es-Salaam.

Thus the larger part of the colony had been cleared, but the effort had been very trying to the white men, as well as to the horses[1] on which General Smuts depended for the mobility of his columns. Consequently, during the last three months of 1916, some 12,000 of the British white troops were taken out of the country, and their places were taken by the King's African Rifles and the Nigerian force which landed under General Cunliffe in December. The country was divided into two parts, the east and centre occupied by General Hoskin's division; the west by General van Deventer's division, which co-operated with General Northey. On 16th January, 1917, General Smuts, who had now been appointed to attend the meetings of the War Cabinet in London, relinquished the command to General Hoskins, having broken the German power of offensive and driven him to the outskirts of the colony.

Von Lettow's forces had fallen to some 8500, of which about 1100 were whites, and they were to continue for long to offer resistance. Their main bodies were strongly protected in the Kilwa hill-country, halfway between Dar-es-Salaam and the Portuguese frontier, with smaller bands farther south, able to take any opportunity of raiding Portuguese territory. A very heavy rainy season prevented any operations against them till the beginning of June, 1917, when General van Deventer, to whom General Hoskins had handed over the command, undertook them. He began a parallel advance in two columns, and met, fought, and drove back von Lettow-Vorbeck's forces at Narongombe (19th July). There was another pause, followed by other concerted movements and occasional brushes, in which, after the Belgians had occupied Mahenge (9th October), General van Deventer drove the German commander into the Kitangari valley (20th November). An effort by cavalry to envelop him failed, though von Lettow-Vorbeck was forced to abandon his guns in order to escape into Portuguese territory. His colleague, Colonel Tafel, who had valiantly and cleverly held off Northey's column, for long made an effort to join him, and, evading a local British column, under Colonel Shorthouse escaped to Nevala. On 15th and 18th November van Deventer, fighting his last engagements with von Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa, completely broke his resistance, capturing 376 Germans and 1100 Askaris, and entered Nevala on 21st November, where, six days later, Tafel unwittingly walked straight into the trap and surrendered. On 1st December General van Deventer announced that German East Africa was clear of the enemy, but, as mentioned on p. 285, von Lettow-Vorbeck continued at large with his main body in Portuguese East Africa through the greater part of the following year, finally forcing his way into Rhodesia, and surrendering there under the terms of the Armistice.

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## CONCLUSION

Such in outline are the features of a war which, beginning on a remote frontier of

[1] The Tsetse fly disease carried off nine-tenths of them.

the Balkans and Austria-Hungary, left hardly any nation of Europe outside its devouring fury, and drew into it peoples and territories far beyond. The narrative is susceptible of much expansion, for the history of each nation's share in it is one which is linked with that of the world, and of the world's civilization. Whether the peace that was at length reached is what its authors, of whom M. Clemenceau, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Wilson were the chief, strove to make it—just and enduring—only the future can show.

The Peace Treaty is, in itself, an instrument of such ramified structure, and so dependent for its fulfilment on factors that are yet hidden from many who took a part in framing it, that its consequences can neither be foreseen nor indicated. It rests for its accomplishment on the design of a League of Nations which was the ideal of the President who brought America into the war, thereby seeking not merely to end it, but to end all wars.

If the new world was not set up at the Peace Conference, much of the old world has been destroyed. On 28th November, 1918, the Kaiser signed his formal abdication of the Crown of Prussia and the German Imperial Crown: and the German Republic under President Ebert, a shoemaker, was set up in the stead of the old German Empire. The Hapsburg Monarchy was no more; and President Masaryk was elected first President of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece rejected their kings: Russia at the beginning of 1920 still weltered in a Bolshevik autocracy. Yet despite the disappointment of many hopes, Europe and mankind may still trust that all the bitterness and sacrifice have not been vain. In one empire at least that hope shines bright; and it perhaps has received no better or simpler expression than in the letter addressed to King George by the British Prime Minister at the signing of Peace.

*28th June*, 1919.

La Galerie des Glaces
du Château de Versailles.

*Mr. Lloyd George, with his humble duty to Your Majesty, has the honour to announce that the long and terrible war, in which the British Empire has been engaged with the German Empire for more than four years, and which has caused such suffering to mankind, has been brought to an end this afternoon by the Treaty of Peace just signed in this hall.*

*He desires on behalf of all the Plenipotentiaries of Your Majesty's Empire to tender their heartfelt congratulations to Your Majesty on the signature of a Treaty which marks the victorious end of a terrible struggle which has lasted so long, and in which Your Majesty's subjects from all parts of the Empire have played so glorious a part*

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